FRONTISPIECE.

THOU ART THE MAN.

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K. De Coetlogon (C.E.)

THE PORTRAITURE OF THE CHRISTIAN PENITENT:

ATTEMPTED IN

A COURSE OF SERMONS UPON PSALM LI.

IN WHICH IT IS DESIGNED TO SHEW, WHAT THOSE VIEWS ARE OF DIVINE TRUTH WITH WHICH REAL CHRISTIANS ARE USUALLY FAVOURED; AND THE INFLUENCE THEY WILL HAVE UPON THEIR TEMPERS AND PRACTICE.

BY THE REV. CHA. DE COETLOGON, A. M.

VOL. I.

Without FAITH it is impossible to please God. Heb. xi. 6.
Except ye REPENT, ye shall all perish. Luke xiii. 3.
Without HOLINESS no man shall see the Lord. Heb. xii. 14.
That it may please thee to give us true repentance; to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and to endue us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, to amend our lives according to thy holy word. Church of England.

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TO THE

HEARERS AND PROMOTERS

OF THE FOLLOWING WORK,

IT IS INSCRIBED,

WITH ALL HUMILITY AND RESPECT,

BY THEIR VERY OBLIGED

AND AFFECTIONATE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

SOUTH STREET,
GROSVENOR SQUARE.

PREFACE.

IT is an obſervation too evidently founded upon fact, and confirmed by ſenſible experience, to need any additional arguments, that few ages have been more deſtitute of every degree of piety and decency, than that in which we live. And however great and univerſal the influence of TRUE RELIGION may have been upon the minds and manners of men in former times, it is a truth, which ought to affect every benevolent and ſerious mind, that it is now looked upon as a thing entirely calculated for weak and ignorant people: as if the Deity were unworthy of any ſervice but from the melancholy and ſuperſtitious; and as if it were the only mark of good

ſenſe and fine breeding, to emulate infernal ſpirits, and for creatures of a day, to treat their great Creator and Lord with inſolence and contempt.

But, amidſt all the efforts of Profaneneſs to defeat, of Infidelity to reject, and of Diſſipation to elude the force of Religion upon the mind, there are few inſtances, in which we may not diſcover that CONSCIENCE ſtands, like the angel who met Balaam in the way with a drawn ſword, and ſtrikes conviction, though but for a moment, into the moſt apoſtate heart. Men may love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil: but yet they will have certain lucid intervals, in which they will feel many imperfect and unavailing motions towards what, at other times, they deem folly and madneſs; and for their neglect of which, however unwillingly, they muſt ſuffer very ſevere rebukes from a guilty breaſt: ſo that they cannot, notwithſtanding all their labour and attempts, entirely ſhake off every ſerious impreſſion, and live in oppoſition to the glory of the divine Being, and their own beſt happineſs, without being

being tormented with a present sting, the sad presage of future and eternal woe.

The great misfortune is, that mankind will not, or dare not, make use of, what is beautifully called the eye of the soul, CONSIDERATION: for want of which, under the influence of fear and levity, they remain utter strangers to the very nature, as well as to the love and practice of true Religion. They will not even give themselves time to weigh its importance, or to inquire into its constituent parts: and tho' they are ready enough to make experiments of every kind of pleasure which the vanities of time and sense can afford, they will not permit religion to have its trial; but chuse, (with an irrational and impious disregard) to take it for granted, "that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," while they industriously turn aside from walking in them.

The strait and narrow way is not, however, entirely deserted, though but thinly strewed. The temple of Piety is not altogether forsaken, though it is rarely crowded. Our little globe, though "the Bed-

lam of the universe," is not wholly destitute of some, who are *in their right mind*; worshippers of God in spirit and in truth: for God is a spirit, and seeketh such to worship him, as, through the efficacy of divine and supernatural grace, adore him in the truth of his nature, and worship him in the spirit of their minds.

Now, the right worship of God necessarily supposes a sound apprehension of those divine and spiritual truths which are essential to salvation. We have been told, indeed, that it matters not what we believe; that a merciful God cannot condemn an honest man, whether he be a Jew, Turk, or Infidel; that it is of very little consequence whether we worship Jehovah, Jove, or Lord, or any other imaginary God, which we may have formed in our own brain. And so, according to the sentiments of these gentlemen of more enlarged ideas, a false teacher is a very harmless animal; an error in judgment is a very trifling concern; and there is no such thing with them, as a damnable heresy; and it is no

matter

matter what men's principles be, if their lives be good.

For modes of faith let learned bigots fight,
He can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.

Admit this maxim, and you make divine revelation of none effect; you give a sanction to infidelity of every kind and degree; you frustrate the design of the incarnation of Christ in every view; and you make Paganism itself as safe a way to heaven, as Christianity. If *truth* be an immaterial thing, why did Christ come down from heaven, to bear witness to it? If points of doctrine be not worth contending for, why did an apostle say, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you, let him be accursed?" And why do we read of some, whose great sin and fault was, that they received not the *truth* in the love of it, that they might be saved? And why do the sacred writings speak of damnable heresies? Certainly these are sufficient testimonies to convince us, that, though right principles without practice be worse

than

than nothing, practice without right principles is good for nothing. So that if there be any virtue, whatsoever things are *true*, as well as whatsoever things are lovely, are to be had in equal estimation by every serious mind.

True Religion therefore may be said essentially to consist in the right knowlege of God, accompanied with suitable affections towards him. In order to which, it is necessary that we conceive of him as a Being infinite, indivisible, and incomprehensible in his nature; and that in that Nature there are three distinct persons in one undivided Godhead: who is the almighty Creator and Preserver of the whole world; the Searcher of all hearts; the Disposer of all persons, events, and things in heaven and in earth: who is infinitely holy, inflexibly just, invariably faithful and true, and unspeakably gracious and good.

Such a view of the glorious God, if it be of a practical nature, and have a proper effect upon the heart, is never separated from true self-knowlege; or a conviction of our own helplessness, guilt, and misery: of

which

which we must have a right sense and feeling: acknowleging, with all the wise and pious, whose characters are left upon sacred record for our example and imitation, that we are by nature the children of wrath; enemies to God; and heirs of everlasting woe: that we are naturally depraved and corrupt throughout, having the *Understanding* darkened, our *Wills* full of rebellion against the will of heaven, and our *Affections* earthly, sensual, and devilish: that our minds and consciences are defiled, and that we are morally dead in trespasses and sins; alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, and from the supreme love of him, because of the blindness of our hearts.

Few people indeed will be fond of such a picture as this; and therefore mankind will be very unwilling to acknowlege their own likeness in it, much less to allow it to be their *express image*, though it be drawn by an unerring hand. But however, Lord Shaftesbury certainly spoke the truth, when he said, that "they are likely to be the greatest impostors, who speak most favourably of man-

mankind:' for in ſo doing they muſt contradict at the ſame time the moſt ſtubborn facts, and the oracles of God; which aſſure us, that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things and deſperately wicked;" that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually;" that "there is none that doeth good, no not one:" that "all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory (that is, the image, the favour, and the enjoyment) of God:" that "every mouth muſt be ſtopped, and all the world become guilty before God." This is the ſcripture account of the moral hiſtory and character of human nature. They therefore, be they who they may, who ſpeak more favourably of it than divine revelation authorizes, are impoſtors, deceivers, and cruel enemies to the beſt intereſts of their fellow-men. From ſuch turn away.

And why? Becauſe they attempt to ſuperſede the propriety and neceſſity of the great undertaking of the Redeemer: and while they keep mankind in a ſtate of ignorance reſpecting their miſery and danger, they keep them alſo in a ſtate of the moſt fatal diſregard

gard about the means of recovery. 'To know ourſelves diſeaſed, is half our cure:' ſo, to be truly ſenſible of the deſperate condition in which we are by nature, is the firſt ſtep towards a ſpeedy and effectual application to him who alone can deliver us out of it: who is able to reſtore us to the favour of God; to make us new and holy creatures, ſuch as He can delight in and love; to redeem us from ſin, and death, and hell; and to introduce us to the divine preſence and enjoyment, to the kingdom of heaven and glory for ever.

Thus the true knowlege of ourſelves is the firſt advance towards true felicity: as it leads us at laſt to an acquaintance with the beſt Friend and only Saviour of mankind, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the ſecond perſon in the co-equal and co-eternal Godhead: who, at the expence of the ſevereſt ſufferings, and obedience unto death, by the meritorious efficacy of his precious blood, and perfect righteouſneſs, hath procured all the bleſſings of grace and glory for every penitent and humble ſinner who cometh unto God by him.

One

One of the methods of bringing a guilty creature into the divine favour, which it hath pleased infinite Wisdom to appoint, is that of REPENTANCE: the necessity of which is less disputed than any other article of divine truth whatsoever. What we have to lament is, that mankind are so much mistaken about its nature; some imagining that it consists in an empty *pretence* of being sorry for our sins, when our dissolution is at hand; when the king of terrors is warning us of an approaching eternity. I call it a pretence, from a persuasion that a man, who defers his repentance till that awful period, understands nothing of its true nature; and when he appears before the judgment-seat of Christ, he will know that he was not really sorry for sins, only he did not like to be damned for them.

Others again imagine that Repentance consists in some external reformation, in forsaking some gross and scandalous practices to which they have been addicted, and in doing such good works as their business, pleasure, or convenience shall permit. But I am sure no person has read his bible to

any

any uſeful purpoſe, who can ſatisfy himſelf with ſuch a partial and deluſive view of Repentance as this.

Others there are, who talk about beginning to repent at a certain time of life, ſome future ſeaſon; when it will be both decent and politic in them to retire from the gaieties and pleaſures of the world, and to devote themſelves to repentance and amendment, to piety and good works, and to the care of their ſouls: thus making the glory and honour of God give place to their own corrupt humour and fleſhly gratifications; and that which ſhould be eſteemed *the one thing needful*, their laſt and leaſt concern. It is equally evident from reaſon and religion that ſuch people are guilty of the moſt ſhameful folly, madneſs, and impiety, and that they know as much about the nature of chriſtian Repentance, as an Hottentot or an Heathen.

Upon this account, ſince there are ſo many deluſive and dangerous conceits about a thing which is of the higheſt importance to our eternal welfare, the expediency of an attempt to deſcribe its true nature is in-

disputable. And such is the design of the following pages; which are not written for the entertainment of the Trifler, the amusement of the Scholar, or the discernment of the Critic, but for the spiritual instruction and improvement of the serious and humble mind. Neither would the author be understood dogmatically to impose the sentiments advanced in them upon any of his readers, but to present them to their most candid and attentive consideration. They propose nothing new, to gratify a vain and idle curiosity; the whole work being raised by old materials furnished out of that most renowned and antient storehouse, THE WORD OF GOD. Therefore, to the law and to the testimony: search the scriptures, and, like the noble Bereans, see whether these things be so or no. Judge for yourselves. Be not satisfied with what ministers tell ye, lest the blind lead the blind, till both fall into the ditch. Remember, it is neither learning nor education that makes the minister or the christian, but divine grace, and divine teaching: and the poorest peasant has as much right to

these

these, as the greatest scholar upon earth. They are both the gift of God. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above"—What! from the pulpit? from the man in the lawn-sleeves, or in the black cloak? No: but, "from the Father of lights." Therefore, "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God."

Some there are indeed who are too proud to ask such a favour of him, and too wise in their own conceits to submit to be taught by him. With such, the following truths will meet with little acceptance, perhaps with the most sovereign contempt. Common humanity and benevolence might induce one to reason with people of this stamp in behalf of the great doctrines of christianity; but really, it is very disheartening to think, that there are three difficulties in the way, which leave us almost without hope of success. The most profound IGNORANCE, the most rooted PREJUDICE, and the most fatal spirit of LICENTIOUS-

NESS; which, like a moral *Cerberus*, ſtand to defend the fort of INFIDELITY; and we may venture to affirm, that there never was an avowed infidel and oppoſer of divine revelation but upon one or all of theſe principles—

Either they are intirely ignorant of the deſign, beauty, evidence, conſiſtency, perfection, and glory of the religion they oppoſe—

Or, they are really ſo prejudiced, that they will not make uſe of the means, nor duly weigh the arguments in its favour, and by which they might be brought rationally to ſee and acknowlege its excellency and truth—

Or elſe, which is more frequently the caſe, the great ſecret is, their conſciences would be put into a moſt dreadful flutter, and their pride would be exceedingly hurt, if they were to liſten to the truths advanced in the bible; which indeed are very apt to be juſtly ſevere upon the boaſted dignity of human nature, to ſtrip it of all its fine plumes of moral rectitude, virtue, and good-

 neſs,

neſs, and to denounce moſt ſhocking things againſt ſuch as have a prodigious taſte for the luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the eye, and the pride of life. And if your libertines and pretending infidels were to give any tolerable attention to what the ſacred writings ſay about *righteouſneſs*, *temperance*, and a *judgment* to come, like Felix, infamous as he was, and as they generally are, they muſt *tremble*; and to tremble, you know, is only fit for thoſe who have not wit or wickedneſs enough to laugh at hell, and, like the devil, to bid Omnipotence itſelf defiance.

It would be unkind not to feel for the ſtate and danger of ſuch characters: let it therefore be remembered by thoſe who value themſelves upon their contempt of the ſcriptures, and who glory in their ſhame, that,

To reject chriſtianity is the moſt effectual way to open the very flood-gates of licentiouſneſs, oppreſſion, luxury, and immorality in all its forms; as we ſee in the preſent age of moſt notorious infidelity. So that no infidel ought to be looked upon in any other

light, by every honeſt and benevolent mind, but as the greateſt peſt to ſociety, and enemy to the comfort of mankind.

Beſides, upon the bare ſuppoſition, the moſt diſtant probability of the truth of the chriſtian religion, to treat the important and intereſting matters of which it ſpeaks with obloquy, ridicule, and contempt, is to be guilty of the moſt abſurd and preſumptuous raſhneſs. And we may be certain that no man will ever be ſo mad and daring, without firſt taking his leave of common ſenſe, common decency, and common honeſty.

Moreover, the *Ne plus ultrà*, the utmoſt extent to which the line of infidelity can reach, is to conclude that the whole of divine revelation *may* be falſe: all the power of earth and hell can never prove that it *is* ſo. It *may* therefore be true; and if ſo, all the ſons of infidelity may vent their malice againſt Chriſt and his religion as much as they pleaſe now, but he that ſitteth in heaven ſhall one day laugh *them* to ſcorn, the Lord ſhall have *them* in deriſion: for when death

death comes, their infidelity will be effectually cured, though the remedy will indeed be far worſe than the diſeaſe; for then the bites of a never-dying worm, and the ſtings of an ever-gnawing conſcience, will convince them to their eternal ſorrow, that 'none are ſo blind as thoſe who will not ſee.'

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FIRST VOLUME.

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Note,

Note, Let the attentive reader be pleased to correct the following

E R R A T A.

Page 11,	Line 15,	for *past*, read *part*.
130,	13,	for *the*, read *thy*.
141,	20, 1,	for *person*, read *persons*.
238,	21,	for *hath*, read *had*.
295,	6,	for *are*, read *is*.
377,	1,	dele the latter *my*.

SERMON I.

PSALM li. 1, 2.

HAVE MERCY UPON ME, O GOD, ACCORDING TO THY LOVING-KINDNESS: ACCORDING UNTO THE MULTITUDE OF THY TENDER MERCIES BLOT OUT MY TRANSGRESSIONS. WASH ME THROUGHLY FROM MINE INIQUITY, AND CLEANSE ME FROM MY SIN.

THE great peculiarity of the ſacred writings, and what ought to be conſidered as an internal evidence of their divinity, is, that the inſpired penmen repreſent things as they really are. Unlike all human compoſitions, they bear that diſtinguiſhing ſtamp of truth, called ſimplicity; in that they point out, in colourings equally ſtrong, the faults as well as the excellencies of their greateſt characters. A very ſtriking inſtance of which we have in the hiſ-

tory of the perſon to whom this pſalm refers.

It is with the greateſt propriety ſtiled, "A penitential pſalm," as containing a moſt pathetic deſcription of a ſoul under ſpiritual diſtreſs on account of ſin; with all that variety of gracious ſenſations which uſually accompany ſuch a ſtate.

As to its author, there can be little doubt of its having been dictated by David, who, though one of the moſt eminent ſaints recorded in the word of God, was not out of the reach of temptation, nor freed from the poſſibility of committing the greateſt ſins. Therefore, "let him who thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall. Be not high minded, but fear:" for in this ſenſe, bleſſed is the man who feareth always.

The remarkable occaſion of its being penned, we may learn from 2 Sam. xi. where we are informed, "that at the time when kings go forth to battle, David ſent Joab, and his ſervants with him, and all Iſrael; but David tarried ſtill at Jeruſalem." It is hard to be out of the way of duty, and not in the way of temptation.

Where-

Where God's providence ſends us, his grace will generally protect us. Joſeph was engaged in his proper office, was tempted, and was preſerved. David was out of his calling, was tempted, and fell.

"For it came to paſs at even-tide, that David aroſe from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's houſe: and from the roof he ſaw a woman waſhing herſelf, and the woman was very beautiful to look upon." Sin and indolence are very nearly allied. Security and danger are ſeldom far aſunder. Idle folks tempt the devil to tempt them. A moſt convincing proof of all which, we have in the circumſtances of David's fall. The object was preſented, the eye wandered, the fleſh luſted, and the heart was enſnared. O what need have we to pray continually, "Turn away mine eyes, leſt they behold vanity. Help us, O Lord, to make a covenant with them, that we will not look upon the thing that is evil. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil: avoid it, paſs not by it, turn from it, and paſs away," Prov. iv. 14, 15.

Happy had it been for David, had he followed this advice; "but when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin." "When he ſaw the woman, ſo pleaſant to the eyes, he ſent meſſengers, and enquired after her, and took her, and defiled her." So true it is, that the holieſt men of God are capable of committing the moſt heinous tranſgreſſions. Moſes, with all his meekneſs, ſhall on a ſudden be angry and paſſionate. The faith of Abraham cannot always ſecure him from the moſt ſhameful exerciſes of unbelief. Job himſelf, though perfect and upright in the eſtimation of God, notwithſtanding his poverty and humility, ſhall be ſo proud as to exalt his righteouſneſs above that of God's, Job xxxv. 2. Hezekiah ſhall be ſo fooliſh and ignorant as to value his own treaſures more than God's honor. The beloved diſciple ſhall ſo forget the ſweetneſs of love and compaſſion, as to wiſh to call down fire from heaven to conſume his fellow-creatures. Not the zeal of Peter could keep him from denying his Lord and Maſter with curſes and with oaths: nor could the holineſs of the man after

God's

God's own heart defend him from committing adultery with Bathſheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.

One ſin very rarely comes alone; it is generally attended with a long train of evils. No man can ſay to any corrupt affection, Hitherto ſhalt thou go, and no farther. "For it came to paſs that the woman conceived, and ſent and told David, ſaying, I am with child." And David ſent for Uriah the Hittite, under pretence of enquiring after military affairs, and he did eat and drink before him, and he made him drunk. O the dreadful nature of ſin! how does it blind the underſtanding, ſtupefy the conſcience, and harden the heart of the ſinner! Is this the man whom God had choſen for himſelf, his diſtinguiſhed favorite, the ſubject of ſo many, ſo great, and ſuch unmerited mercies? Well might he exclaim upon another occaſion, "Lord, what is man!" But this is not all—"for it came to paſs in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and ſent it by the hand of Uriah; and in the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the fore-front of the

battle, and retire from him, that he may be ſmitten and die." Joab obeyed the king's order; the ſcheme ſucceeded, and Uriah was ſlain. How cruel, to ſend him with the ſentence of his own execution! How ungenerous to take advantage of his courage and bravery to his own deſtruction! How infamous, to involve others in his guilt, by making them acceſſary to his death! No wonder, if after all this we find him adopting the language of infidelity, and practically denying the particular providence of God.

For when the meſſenger, whom Joab ſent to David to acquaint him with the ſtate of the war, had delivered his intelligence, adding withal the account of Uriah's death; we find the king hypocritically concealing his joy, and referring the matter to fate: "Ah, ſays he, with an air of profane infidelity, the ſword devoureth one as well as another: time and chance happeneth to all." Such is human nature, with all its advantages, when left to itſelf! ſo "deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked, is the heart of man; who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9.

In

In the ſequel of the hiſtory we have a moſt beautiful diſplay of God's faithfulneſs, mercy, and truth: for as God had promiſed in his covenant, that all things were ordered and ſure for the ſalvation of his ſervant David; and as the Lord knew that there was a moral impoſſibility of his ever recovering himſelf out of the guilt and miſery into which ſin had plunged him, behold the arm of the Lord is ſtretched out for his deliverance. Though the ſin was great and abominable, offenſive to God, and diſpleaſing to the eyes of his glory, nevertheleſs his loving-kindneſs would he not utterly take from him, nor ſuffer his truth to fail. But as it was impoſſible for him to be ſaved in this ſtate of ſinfulneſs and ſtupidity, therefore the Lord is pleaſed to make uſe of his appointed means in order to bring him out of it.

For this end we underſtand, from the following chapter, the Lord ſent Nathan to David. And Nathan came to him, and uttered that moſt tender, affecting, and inſtructive parable concerning the rich man who had exceeding many flocks, and the

poor man who had but one little ew-lamb. The design of which was, that David might behold, as in a glass, his own moral image: but, alas! sin and ignorance were so closely united, that he seems never to have suspected the intention of the prophet, or the meaning of the parable, with allusion to himself; insomuch that the preacher was obliged to deal very plainly and faithfully with him: "And Nathan said unto David, THOU ART THE MAN." So indispensably needful is it for the ministers of Christ to counteract the pride, the self-deceit, and blindness of mankind by the most direct and particular applications.

That divine power, that supernatural agency, without which Nathan might have thundered these words in David's ears for ever in vain, accompanied them to his heart. He saw his frightful character delineated before him by the pencil of the inspired prophet; and in the view of his complicated guilt, under a gracious conviction of his vileness, touched with a more pungent sense of it than he could possibly express, he vents himself in that short, but com-

comprehenſive confeſſion, "I have ſinned againſt the Lord." To which the prophet immediately replied, fully aſſured, that out of the abundance of his heart his mouth ſpake, "The Lord alſo hath put away thy ſin." The impurity of it is done away, the guilt of it is pardoned, and the impiety of it ſhall be remembered no more againſt thee for ever. O what abundant reaſon have we to take up the language of Micah here, and ſay, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and paſſeth by the tranſgreſſion of the remnant of his heritage! he retaineth not his anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in mercy." Mic. vii. 18.

Follow we now the royal penitent, after the prophet had taken his leave of him, into his ſecret retirement. See him enter into his cloſet meditating upon his ſtate, his ſin, his helpleſſneſs, his guilt. What unfeigned ſelf-abhorrence, what deep humiliation, what godly ſorrow may we ſuppoſe poſſeſſed his ſoul! Behold him proſtrate before the God of his ſalvation, pleading with him for mercy, upon the ſtrength of

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his being ſo rich in mercy to all who call upon him; confeſſing his ſinfulneſs, acknowledging its aggravations, and lamenting its bitter ſource, a corrupt nature. Behold him deploring his hypocriſy and his filthineſs, and condemning himſelf, by owning that the religion which God required, muſt be ſeated in the heart, and muſt have a ſanctifying effect upon the temper and life. For the want of which, he earneſtly implores that forgiveneſs which flows from the fountain-head of God's free and ſovereign grace, through the channel of the Redeemer's blood, into the believing and penitent heart: knowing, that the blood of Jeſus being ſprinkled upon his conſcience, he ſhould be cleanſed from all ſin, and be as pure as an angel of light: Nor does he forget to beg of God to make him a clean heart, and to renew a right ſpirit within him; to revive his ſoul with a freſh ſenſe of his forgiving love, and to fill him with all joy and peace in believing; and that for this bleſſed purpoſe, that his heart being enlarged, he might run the way of his commandments, be telling of his ſalvation

all

all the day long, and exhorting others to come and taste and see how gracious the Lord is; that he might be fired with zeal for his glory, sing aloud of his abounding mercy, and that his heart, lip, and life, might unitedly harmonize in shewing forth his praise.

Such is the design, subject, and occasion of this psalm. But as whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our instruction; and as it is the grand prerogative of the Most High to bring good out of evil, we can have no doubt but that this psalm was written for the spiritual benefit of real christians in every age, and in every part of the world.

Leaving, then, any confined view to the particular person who penned it, or to the occasion of its being penned, we may observe in general, that it presents us with a complete and striking portraiture of the *christian penitent*; and in particular, that the two first verses point out to us the following inquiries;

I. What

I. What is the refuge of every real christian in times of diſtreſs?

II. Whether it be not a diſtinguiſhing mark of true grace, to deſire the pardon of ſin more than deliverance from any trouble whatever?

III. Whether the moſt improved ſaints upon earth have any hope of acceptance before God, but what is founded upon the multitude of his tender mercies in Chriſt Jeſus?

While I am ſpeaking upon each of theſe particulars, may the Spirit of God make them profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, to every hearer in his preſence at this time!

To begin with the firſt of theſe, viz. What is that to which the real chriſtian has recourſe in every time of diſtreſs?

That the people of God are ſubject to afflictions with the reſt of mankind, is what ſcripture and experience both atteſt. Man, as man, is born to trouble as the

ſparks

ſparks fly upwards. Sin and ſorrow are neceſſarily allied; and ſo are ſorrow and human nature. And an infallible witneſs aſſures us, that the people of God are ſo far from being any exception to this remark, that "many are the troubles of the righteous:" that "whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every child whom he receiveth."

Now the diſtreſſes of God's people are of various kinds: ſometimes they take their riſe from outward afflictions, from apparently ſevere and trying diſpenſations of God's providence, ſuch as poverty, loſſes, pain, and ſickneſs. Theſe they ſuffer in common with the reſt of their fellow creatures; and in ſuch a manner, that they cannot tell either love or hatred from all that is before them: in this reſpect, "there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked."

Sometimes they are in bitterneſs on account of the power of inward corruptions; the ſtrength of which they feel more ſenſibly, becauſe of the oppoſition it meets with from the principle of grace, which is wrought in their hearts by the Spirit of God.

God. Hence, what is called the ſpiritual warfare, the conteſt between fleſh and ſpirit; for in every renewed ſoul, "the fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the fleſh, and theſe are contrary to each other, ſo that they cannot do the things that they would," Gal. v. 17. The experience of the real chriſtian perfectly harmonizes with what the apoſtle ſays of himſelf in Rom. vii. "I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is preſent with me. For I *delight* in the law of God after the *inward* man. But I feel another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity;" that is, into a forced, not a willing ſubjection, to the law of ſin, which is in my members. "O wretched man that I am." Such are the feelings, and ſuch the language, of thoſe who grone under the burden of indwelling ſin and a corrupt nature*.

At

* There is a very ſpecific difference between what is here referred to, and that common ſtruggle in the breaſt of every man, which is between his reaſon and his corrupt

At other times their ſorrows originate from the attack of ſtrong and violent temptations. When they are beſet with blaſphemous, doubting, fearing, or deſponding thoughts; when the enemy cometh in like a flood, as if he would bear away all before him, and in a moment extinguiſh that little ſpark of divine life which God has communicated to the regenerate ſoul; when the fiery darts of the wicked one ſeem to ſtick faſt within them; and when all the gilded baits of the world and the fleſh conſpire to draw the heart from God; when this is the caſe, who can tell what perplexities affect the real chriſtian, who has determined, in the ſtrength of God, to take up arms againſt the world, the fleſh, and the devil! Eph. vi. 12.

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rupt paſſions: this ariſes from the efforts of natural conſcience, whereas the other reſults from the dictates of a mind enlightened to ſee, and a heart diſpoſed to prefer and delight in what is excellent and ſpiritual, in oppoſition to what is ſinful and carnal. The one reſpects only the happineſs of the creature, the other has in view the additional circumſtance of the glory of the Creator. "How ſhall I do that which is evil, and ſin againſt God!"

But

But after all, the moſt aggravated diſtreſs of the people of God ariſes from a feeling ſenſe of the guilt of ſin upon their conſciences. So far are they from ſinning that grace may abound, and from indulging themſelves in offending God, becauſe his grace is ſo free, and his mercy ſo great, that whenever, through the power of their corruptions, and the violence of temptation, they have been ſurpriſed or allured into the commiſſion of any evil, their grief is beyond expreſſion; the remembrance of it is painful unto them, the burden of it is intolerable. They then know, by bitter experience, what Solomon meant when he ſaid, "A man's ſpirit, by arguments drawn from reaſon and philoſophy, or by natural fortitude of mind, will ſuſtain his infirmities, but a wounded ſpirit who can bear!" Prov. xviii. 14.

Now under each or all of theſe diſtreſſes, how will the real chriſtian conduct himſelf? What method will he purſue? To whom, and to what will he have recourſe? For an anſwer to this, let us recur to the ſacred records, to the law and to the teſti-

mony;

mony; where we ſhall be taught what has been the practice of the faithful ſervants of God in thoſe circumſtances.

See, for inſtance, what is ſaid of the good king Jehoſhaphat, in 2 Chron. xx. where we are told, "that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, with others, united their forces, and came againſt Jehoſhaphat to battle." This brought the king into a perilous ſituation. What did he? As a ſervant of God, he could not enter into a league with the enemies of the Lord; and in all probability his own army was very inferior to the great multitude which was coming againſt him. In this difficulty, how did he behave himſelf? "Jehoſhaphat feared, and ſet himſelf to ſeek the Lord." In what way? By prayer: for he ſtood in the midſt of the congregation of Judah and Jeruſalem in the houſe of the Lord, and ſaid, "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might againſt this great company that cometh againſt us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are unto thee." What was the anſwer of God to this prayer, we learn from

the 15th verſe, "Hearken ye, all Judah and Jeruſalem, and thou king Jehoſhaphat, thus ſaith the Lord, Be not afraid, neither be diſmayed by reaſon of this great multitude; for the battle is not your's, but God's."

Another inſtance we have of a ſimilar nature in the hiſtory of Aſa: of whom we are informed in 2 Chron. xiv. that he had an army which conſiſted of five hundred and fourſcore thouſand men; and that there came out againſt him Zerah the Ethiopian, with an hoſt of a thouſand thouſand. In this unequal war, and therefore trying diſpenſation of providence, to what refuge did he fly? Aſa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord, for he had recourſe to God in prayer, and ſaid, "Lord, it is nothing to thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God, for we reſt on thee, and in thy name we go againſt this multitude: O Lord, thou art our God, let not man prevail againſt thee." So the Lord ſmote the Ethiopian before Aſa.

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The ſame has been the conduct of the people of God with reſpect to their ſpiritual difficulties. When the great apoſtle of the Gentiles had a thorn in the fleſh, the meſſenger of ſatan ſent to buffet him, leſt he ſhould be exalted above meaſure; whatever the temptation was, it was a ſore one; and therefore he beſought the Lord thrice, he applied in earneſt and repeated prayer to God, that it might depart from him. And the Lord heard his requeſt; not indeed ſo as to deliver him immediately from it; but as to promiſe him grace ſufficient to ſupport him under it, 2 Cor. xii.

And to mention no more: how plainly does it appear from the conduct of David in the pſalm before us; that the gracious heart, having contracted freſh guilt, will have recourſe to God for the removal of its diſtreſs! "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, ſays the penitent ſoul, according to thy loving-kindneſs, and not according to my deſert: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my tranſgreſſions. Waſh me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanſe me from my ſin."

Such is the refuge of the children of God under all their diſtreſſes: and no marvel, ſince they are taught to eye him as the diſpoſer of all things in heaven and earth: they know that God alone is able to deliver them; that prayer is the mean himſelf hath preſcribed; that what he hath promiſed he will certainly perform; that he never faileth them who ſeek him in Chriſt Jeſus; that he deſpiſeth not the prayer of the poor deſtitute; and that he is a very preſent help in every time of trouble.

Proceed we now,

II. To ſhew that the real chriſtian will deſire the pardon of ſin more earneſtly than deliverance from any judgment whatever.

If we recur to the hiſtory of David's fall, as related in 2 Sam. xii. 10. we ſhall find, that though God in his abundant mercy forgave his iniquity, he viſited his offences with a rod, and his ſin with ſcourges; many and great were the juſt judgments with which he puniſhed him: in all which he might read his ſin in his puniſhment.

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He had killed Uriah the Hittite with the ſword of the children of Ammon, therefore the ſword was never to depart from his houſe. He had taken the wife of Uriah to be his wife, therefore his neighbour was to take his wives and to lie with them. He had deſpiſed the Lord, and given occaſion to his enemies to blaſpheme, and therefore the Lord would make him deſpicable before all his people. So dreadful was his puniſhment to be. And yet it is very remarkable, that in this whole pſalm before us, we do not find one petition addreſſed to God for the abatement or removal of theſe afflictions. He accepts the puniſhment of his iniquity, and all his ſuit is for the pardon of his ſin *.

* "Wherein, ſaith the learned Mr. Poole in his commentary, he ſheweth himſelf to be a true penitent, becauſe his chief care and deſire was to obtain God's favor, and the forgiveneſs of his ſins, and not the prevention of theſe external ſore judgments which God by Nathan threatened to bring upon him and his houſe, about which there is not a word in this pſalm. Whereas the cares and deſires of hypocrites are chiefly bent towards worldly things, as we ſee in Cain, Gen. iv. 13, 16, 17. and Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 30. and others, Hoſ. vii. 14.

Doſt thou wonder at this? Not, if like David you are taught to ſee, what every true penitent ſees, that there is no evil ſo great as the evil of ſin; no miſery ſo tormenting as the guilt of ſin: that ſin brought death into the world, and all our woe; that all the judgments, and wrath, and curſe of offended Majeſty are revealed from heaven againſt it, Rom. i. 18. Gal. iii. 10. that ſin ſtrikes at the glory of the divine attributes and perfections; nay, at the very being of God; for the ſinner, who ſays in his heart there is no God, wiſhes there was none, and would deſtroy him if he could; and therefore, the worm which never dieth, the fire which is never to be quenched, are both prepared for the perdition of ungodly men, for the puniſhment of SIN.

Every real chriſtian knows that it is impoſſible there ſhould be any ſolid comfort in the heart, or peace in the conſcience, without the pardon of ſin. Without this, riches profit not, pleaſures delight not, honors avail not: there is a worm at the root of all earthly gratifications; there is death in the cup of all ſublunary joys; there is

no

no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked, the impenitent and unpardoned ſinner.

And therefore, when the ſecond Perſon in the ever-bleſſed Trinity came into the world, it was not, as the Jews vainly thought, to put them into the poſſeſſion of kingdoms and empires; to make them rich or great; to ſave them from poverty or trouble; but, which was infinitely better, than all this, "to ſave his people from their ſins:" from their guilt, power, and puniſhment.

This is the reaſon why, if you aſk the people of Chriſt wherein the nature of true happineſs conſiſts? they will reply in in the words of Pſalm xxxii. 1, 2. "Bleſſed is he whoſe tranſgreſſion is forgiven, whoſe ſin is covered: Bleſſed is the man, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." For this bleſſedneſs will every one that is godly pray more earneſtly, than for the removal of any judgment or ſorrow that can await them on this ſide the grave.

But it may be inquired, What is the plea they urge before God for the beſtowment of this bleſſing? This queſtion

naturally leads us to the last consideration in the text, which was,

III. That the best of God's people have no other ground of hope for the pardon of their sins, but the multitude of God's mercies in Christ Jesus *.

* The Hebrew word here translated *have mercy*, signifieth, without cause or desert, Psalm xxxv. 19. lxix. 4. Ezek. xiv. 23. and freely, without paying any price, Exod. xxi. 11. And it is made use of in Gen. vi. 8. where Noah is said to have found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord, that is, special favour, such as the Lord beareth to his chosen in Christ Jesus.

The word *loving-kindness*, in the original, means, an affection of mercy, and bountiful good will towards any, without respect of merit. "Est benignitas seu beneficentia ea, ad quam præstandam quis nulla juris necessitate astringitur; hoc est, planè immerita, minimèque debita, ac prorsùs gratuita benignitas." Leigh in loc.

Tender mercies, or, according to Zanchy in his treatise upon the attributes of God, such a kind of affection as parents feel when they see their children in any extremity. 1 Kings iii. 26.

Blot out, or, as it is used in Exod. xvii. 14. *utterly extirpate*, so as that there shall not be any remembrance of them for ever. Isa. xliii. 25. xliv. 22.

Wash me throughly. Hebr. Multiply to wash me; by which phrase he implies the greatness of his guilt, and the insufficiency of all legal washings, and the necessity of the blood of Christ, Poole in loc.

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The mercy of God is that attribute in the divine nature which disposes him to relieve the miserable. Mercy is for misery. But, as every perfection of the Godhead is guided, if I may so say, by his holiness; therefore his mercy, his holiness, and justice, must all harmonize together: and for this reason it is we assert, that there is no absolute mercy in God, nor any appointed way of a sinner's partaking of his mercy, but in Christ Jesus. God out of Christ is a consuming fire, and the face of the Lord is against every soul of man that doeth evil: but to him who flies to the Saviour, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, or mercy-seat, through faith in his blood; to him the Lord is slow to anger, and of great mercy.

This was David's hope in his present distress: his sole trust was in the tender mercy of God: nor did he expect that that mercy could flow into his heart, but through the channel of the Redeemer's blood; to which he alludes when he says, "*Wash me* throughly from mine iniquity, and *cleanse me* from my sin"—In what? In the blood

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of bulls and of goats? It was impossible that they should take away sin: no doubt the object he had in view at this time was the fountain which was to be opened for sin and uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. the bleeding Lamb of God which was to take away the sin of the world: the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which alone cleanseth from all sin, 1 John i. 7. Neither is there any mercy for a sinner, but what is communicated through this medium. It hath pleased the Father that in him all the fullness of his mercy should dwell; and therefore he is emphatically called, The MERCY, the marrow, the kernel, the sum and substance of all mercy, Luke i. 72.

It is to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus that the holiest saints look for their ground of hope: for to which of the other attributes of God can they look but to this? To his holiness? That pronounces wrath and condemnation upon them. To his justice? That stands engaged to execute the sentence, which the holiness of God has passed. To his power? That is armed with vengeance against every soul of man

that

that doeth evil. The mercy of God is the only refuge.

Nor is this mercy to be received but in and through Chriſt Jeſus. There is no ſalvation in any other: nor forgiveneſs with God but through him. He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt them who come unto God by him. And it is only in Chriſt that the Lord will hold out the ſceptre of his grace to any poor ſinner. Every real chriſtian believes this fundamental truth, and in his heart ſubmits to it, by building all his hopes of acceptance upon the mercy of God in Chriſt Jeſus.

For a proof of this, let one inſtance ſuffice for many that might be produced. Not to mention any of thoſe characters in the word of God, which, on account of their blemiſhes, are recorded as ſtriking evidences of human inſufficiency in its beſt ſtate, let us hear the language of, it may be, the moſt perfect and unſpotted ſaint ſpoken of in ſacred writ, Dan. ix. "O Lord, to us belongeth confuſion of face, becauſe we have ſinned againſt thee, neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord, to walk in his laws

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which he ſet before us; therefore the curſe is poured upon us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy ſervant and his ſupplications, for the Lord's ſake. O my God, incline thine ear and hear, for we do not preſent our ſupplications before thee for our righteouſneſſes, but for thy *great mercies*."

Thus we ſee upon what foundation one of the holieſt ſaints that ever lived raiſed his hope. And we may reſt aſſured of this, that there never was a ſaint admitted into the kingdom of heaven, but who, with his inmoſt ſoul, ſubſcribed to thoſe precious words of the Apoſtle in Titus iii. 5. "Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but according to his *mercy* he ſaved us."

We do not hear the Pſalmiſt under his preſent diſtreſſes endeavoring to palliate his guilt, by urging what he had been, or what he had done for God in times paſt. Had all his former righteouſneſs been weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary againſt this one ſin, it would have been found wanting: and therefore he has immediate recourſe to

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the mercy of God and to the blood of Christ as his only refuge: to that covenant-mercy of which he so delightfully sings in the 136th Psalm, and upon which every gracious soul fixes all his hope of salvation; "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," Jude 21. If so, let us now close the subject in a way of

APPLICATION.

And here let me call upon every one of you in the presence of God, without respect of persons, high and low, rich and poor, young and old, to examine your own hearts, and to inquire how far your characters correspond with that of the real, as well as the professing christian. We are all too apt to mistake the *name* of a thing for its *nature*; and especially in the most important concerns. People first *call* themselves christians, and then take it for granted that they *are* such. But the kingdom of God is not in *word*, but in *power*.

With respect then to our troubles in this life: it may be presumed we all have them in some degree, more or less; in body or in mind;

mind; temporal or ſpiritual. At ſuch ſeaſons, whither do you betake yourſelves? to what do you have recourſe? To human aid? to earthly refuges? to the world, and what it has to give? Alas! if your hearts are right with God, you will be ready to ſay, theſe are phyſicians of no value! miſerable comforters are they all!

With regard to ſin—what think ye of it? what is your ſenſe of it? have you ever ſeen its evil, confeſſed its guilt, and felt its miſery? What is now the principal deſire of your hearts? Is it after money, pleaſure, fame, or honour? or is it, like the true chriſtian's, to be freed from the power and puniſhment of your iniquities?

Upon what is your hope of forgiveneſs and acceptance with God founded? You hope to be ſaved, no doubt. Is it becauſe your offences have not been ſo many in number, or of ſo foul a nature, as thoſe which others have committed; or becauſe you have done ſuch and ſuch works of righteouſneſs, which others have neglected? —Is it ſo? This cannot be the ſpirit of a real chriſtian, becauſe it is the direct contraſt

traſt of all the great examples ſet before us in the Bible.

In ſhort, if your eyes be not opened to a ſight of the ſinfulneſs of your heart; if you have not a deep and affecting ſenſe of your vileneſs, ſo as to be convinced of the abſolute neceſſity of caſting all your hope and dependence upon the free, rich mercy of God in Chriſt Jeſus, you have nothing but preſumption to ſupport you in expecting the forgiveneſs of your ſins; and if you live and die deſtitute of theſe things, beware of the bitter conſequence, which is nothing leſs than a "being puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." —The Lord be pleaſed ſavingly to affect your hearts with an apprehenſion of your danger, before it be for ever too late!

But what a rich ſpring of conſolation to every ſenſible and awakened ſinner, does the doctrine of the text afford us! Be it ſo, that your unworthineſs is as great as your ſins have been innumerable, there is merciful loving-kindneſs with the Lord: and this is as free for you, as it was for any who

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are now praiſing God for it in heaven. The ſame Lord over all is rich in mercy to all who call upon him, from a feeling conviction of their want of it, and that they muſt certainly periſh without it. It is our miſery, not our merit or goodneſs, that renders us proper objects of God's mercy. "When thou waſt in thy blood," ſays the Father of all mercies, lying under the guilt of thy tranſgreſſion, "I ſaid unto thee, Live." "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins," Ex. xvi. Iſ. xlii. 25.

Let not the greatneſs of thy ſins make thee ſuſpect thy right to God's mercy; for O how great is his mercy! Nor the multitude of them; for O what a multitude of tender mercies is there in the heart of God for a penitent ſinner! Be not afraid of preſuming, if you ſhould put in your claim for an intereſt in the mercy of our God; "for the Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and in them who put their truſt in his mercy," Pſalm cxlvii. 11.

What though you are conſcious of much weakneſs and of daily infirmities, remember

ber that the mercies of God are tender mercies; he knoweth our frame; and the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy, as the hiſtory of Job ſufficiently proves: yea, like as a father pitieth his own children, even ſo is the Lord merciful to them that fear him. See a moſt beautiful repreſentation of this in the dealings of God with his people of old, of whom it is ſaid, that they were bent to backſliding, in Hoſea xi. 8.—where we find him expreſſing the fullneſs of his compaſſion in that pathetic and tender expoſtulation, "How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael? how ſhall I make thee as Admah? how ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceneſs of mine anger; I will not return to deſtroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man." How clearly do we ſee the name of God illuſtrated in his conduct, where he hath declared himſelf to be, "The Lord, merciful and gracious, ſlow to anger, and plenteous in goodneſs,

pardoning iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin!" Exod. xxxiv.

Art thou ſtill afraid that God will not exerciſe this mercy towards thee? Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Art thou afraid of ſin? is it that which thy ſoul hateth? doſt thou fear God? fear to offend him, and ſtudy to pleaſe him? Then take heed leſt there be in you an evil heart of unbelief and guilty fear: for with the Lord there is mercy for thee, and with him there is plenteous redemption. O that He may ſo open your eyes to ſee this precious truth, that you may be enabled to ſay, from the ground of your heart, My truſt is in the tender mercy of God for ever and ever!

I am now arrived at the moſt difficult part of my office: ſuch, and ſo great are my ſuſpicions for myſelf and for you, leſt we ſhould abuſe this mercy of God, and turn his grace into licentiouſneſs. I am jealous over you with a godly jealouſy, leſt you ſhould make the mercy of God a cloak for your ſins. The world charges thoſe who know what the goſpel means, with this perverſion of it; the devil wiſhes it; our own

hearts

hearts tempt us to it; and we have all reason to fear lest our conduct and tempers give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to believe it.

If there should be any of this class among us, and conscience should be now acting over again the honest character of Nathan to David, saying, "Thou art the man;" forgive the harshness of the expression; but if the furnace of hell be in one part seven times hotter than another, it is prepared for such unhappy souls.

My fellow-sinners, Is it so with any of you? pray search your own hearts: they are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Pray examine your own lives, and tempers, and conversation, at home, abroad, in public, and in private. If it be, be not deceived; God is not to be mocked. Are you living in the wilful neglect of any known duty? Are you indulging yourselves in any allowed sin? Are you careless, because God is merciful? How opposite is this to the spirit of David! "The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy," says he. And what then? Therefore I will sin

against thee? No.—He adds, "O teach me thy statutes." The sinner who has a gracious dependence upon the mercy of God, has a hearty desire to do the will of God; and this is the will of God, even your sanctification. Remember, then, that we do not preach the mercy of God for the encouragement of the ungodly and profane, but for the comfort and support of the penitent and humble.

"Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious:" "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord," 1 Pet. i. 14.—"And be ye merciful too, as your father which is in heaven is merciful: be ye kind, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. And, I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable

unto

unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

In a word, "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering: and above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfectness; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts; let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; and whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Col. iii. 12.

And now to the God of all mercy, with the dear Son of his love, and the eternal Spirit, three co-equal persons in one Jehovah, be ascribed the kingdom, power, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER.

"O merciful and gracious Lord, whose "mercy is as great as thy majesty, and who "art rich in mercy to all that call upon "thee in sincerity and in truth; teach us

"to make thee our only refuge in every "trying hour; and be thou a very present "help in every time of need. We live in "a world of sin and sorrow, be thou, O "God, our comfort and support. Under "a feeling sense of, and unfeigned repent-"ance for our innumerable transgressions, "may we earnestly apply for thy pardoning "love, and may we have redemption "through the blood of Jesus, even the for-"givenes of our sins, according to the "riches of thy grace! Open our eyes to "see our perishing necessity of such a sal-"vation as thy mercy hath provided for "poor sinners in him; teach us to flee to "him as the only hope set before us; and "help us to believe in him to the saving of "our souls. Have mercy upon us, O "Lord, and according to the multitude of "thy tender mercies do away our trans-"gressions: wash us throughly from our "sins, and cleanse us from our iniquities. "We ask thy mercy, O God, because we "have no merit to recommend us to thy "favor. We have forfeited all right and "title to every blessing thou hast to bestow.

"But

"But to the Lord our God belong mercies "and forgiveness, though we have rebelled "against him. We know that thou art a "merciful God, slow to anger, pardoning "iniquity, transgression and sin. This is "thy name for ever, and this is thy memo-"rial unto all generations. Save us then, "we beseech thee, O Lord our God, for "thy name's sake, by the washing of rege-"neration, and by the renewing of the "Holy Ghost. Quicken us by the power "of thine almighty grace: engraft us into "Christ, living branches in him the living "vine: stamp thy divine image upon our "souls: may we put on the whole armour "of God, and fight the battles of the Lord, "against sin, the world, and the devil: "may the eternal God be our strength "against opposing corruptions: when the "enemy cometh in like a flood, may the Spi-"rit of the Lord lift up his standard against "him: in every afflictive dispensation "may we possess our souls in patience: "and may our trust be in the tender mercy "of God for ever and ever. Hear us, O "thou Father of mercies, for the sake of

"that dear Redeemer who was dead and is "alive again, and ever liveth to make in-"tercession for them who come unto God "by him. Unto whom, with thyself, and "the Holy Spirit, be everlasting worship, "love, and praise." Amen.

SERMON II.

PSALM li. 3.

FOR I ACKNOWLEDGE MY TRANSGRESSIONS; AND MY SIN IS EVER BEFORE ME.

THE foundation of all true religion may in ſome ſenſe be ſaid to lay in ſelf-knowledge: and what the Roman poet obſerved is a moſt infallible truth, that "ſelf-knowledge is of heavenly deſcent *." The ignis fatuus of unenlightened reaſon will never lead a man into the chambers of imagery that are in his own heart: his true nature and character will remain an entire

* E cœlo deſcendit γνωθι σεαυτον.

ſecret

ſecret to himſelf, unleſs that God, who once commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhine into his benighted mind. Till then, though divine revelation hath preſented us with the expreſs image of every natural heart, we ſhall have no clear diſcernment of it. The light will ſhine in darkneſs, while the darkneſs comprehendeth it not.

There is nothing more neceſſary in order to the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of true happineſs, next to the knowledge of God and his Chriſt, than this knowledge of ourſelves. And yet, how afflicting a thought is it to conſider, that in this reſpect the generality of mankind are the greateſt ſtrangers to that with which they are moſt concerned; and moſt ignorant of that, to which they ſtand in the neareſt connection! As the eye ſees every thing but itſelf, ſo are they acquainted with every thing but themſelves. This knowledge, bitter experience hath ſufficiently proved, is too difficult for them, they cannot attain to it; it deſcendeth from above, and cometh down

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from the Father of lights, the giver of every good and perfect gift.

It is for want of this knowledge that we hear the ſelf-conceited Deiſt boaſting of the dignity of his nature; the ſelf-righteous Phariſee thanking God that he is not like other men, and ſaying to the poor Publican, Stand by thyſelf, for I am holier than thou; the proud Socinian, denying the neceſſity of an atonement and vicarious ſacrifice; and the ſelf-ſufficient Pelagian, contending for the anti-chriſtian doctrine of the ability of fallen man for that which is ſpiritually good. True ſelf-knowledge gives the death-wound to each of theſe deluſive and fatal errors.

For as it was the cuſtom of the renowned Philip, king of Macedon, leſt he ſhould be fluſhed with the great victories he had obtained; ſo as, like Alexander, to fancy himſelf immortal, and to forget the uncertainty of all ſublunary things; to command his page to ſalute him every morning with theſe words, "Philip, Remember thou art a man:" ſo, when the Spirit of divine wiſdom and knowledge enters into the ſoul,

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in order to mortify the pride and conceit of fallen man, it never fails to whiſper in his ear, and to impreſs upon his heart, this humbling truth, "Remember, thou art a ſinner." And when theſe words are really ſuggeſted to the mind by the Spirit of God, the gracious conviction is never unaccompanied with the following confeſſion; "I acknowledge my tranſgreſſions, and my ſin is ever before me."

Thus it was with the unfeigned penitent to which the text refers us. When the prophet Nathan had delivered his meſſage, and finiſhed the ſubject with a direct and perſonal application of it to his royal hearer—no ſooner had he charged him with the heinous ſin which he had committed, than he confeſſed the fact, owned the fault, pleaded guilty, and acknowledged all the aggravations which ſo much heightened the vileneſs of the crime; and that, not only in the preſence of the faithful miniſter who had ſo honeſtly repreſented his ſin, with all its infamous circumſtances; but when the prophet departed from him, he could addreſs himſelf in private to the

Searcher

Searcher of all hearts, and ſay, "I acknowledge and confeſs to thee, O God, how I have tranſgreſſed againſt every obligation to the contrary; that I have broken every one of thy righteous laws, by ſinning againſt thy love, and againſt the love of my neighbour; againſt ſpiritual light, knowledge, and grace; and againſt natural juſtice, mercy, and truth*. Having nothing to plead in order to extenuate my guilt, nor any thing to urge in arreſt of judgment, I confeſs my ſin; it is ever before me; have mercy upon me, O Lord; waſh me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanſe me from my ſin."

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* "With grief and ſhame, and abhorrence of myſelf and my ſins, which I have hitherto diſſembled and covered. My tranſgreſſions, in the plural number, for it was not a ſingle, but a complicated wickedneſs, adultery, murder, injuſtice, perfidiouſneſs. That which I had caſt behind my back, is now conſtantly in my view, and fixed in my thoughts and memory."

Poole in loc.

In the Hebrew the verb is in the future tenſe, *I will acknowledge*. Futurum emphaticè ponitur, quod denotat, Et agnoſco, et perpetuò agnoſcam cum pœnitentiâ.

Poole.

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From the words thus introduced, we may take occaſion to enlarge upon a very conſtituent part of evangelical repentance, called *Confeſſion of Sin:* and in diſcuſſing the ſubject it may be moſt profitable, by the bleſſing of God upon what ſhall be offered, to obſerve the following method.

I. To ſhew the neceſſity of true confeſſion of ſin.

II. Wherein the nature of it conſiſts.

III. The benefit conſequent upon it.

In the firſt place, then, we are to ſhew the neceſſity of making confeſſion of ſin. By which we would not be underſtood to give the leaſt ſanction to the doctrine of auricular confeſſion, as advanced by the moſt deluded and heretical votaries of the church of Rome; who tell us, that it is neceſſary to ſalvation that we confeſs every particular ſin to their ignorant and idolatrous prieſts; and who lay as great ſtreſs upon this, as upon confeſſion to God himſelf. All that we contend for is, the indiſpenſible duty of confeſſing our ſins with becoming humiliation

tion of heart to that God againſt whom they have been committed, and who alone can forgive them: for, as the Jews of old juſtly obſerved, Who can forgive ſins but God only?

The neceſſity of this will evidently appear, when we have conſidered that no perſon has any ſcriptural authority for believing his ſins are pardoned, who is deſtitute of this diſpoſition of heart. The promiſes of mercy and forgiveneſs are frequently made with a particular reference to it. For in that beautiful type of the goſpel-diſpenſation, held forth to us in the dedication of the temple built by Solomon, we find him addreſſing God in this language; "What prayer and ſupplication ſoever be made by any man, or by all thy people Iſrael, which ſhall know (acknowledge or confeſs) every one the plague of his own heart, and ſpread forth his hands towards this houſe, then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive." And again, "If thy people ſin againſt thee, and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, ſo that they carry them away captives; yet if

they

they ſhall bethink themſelves, and repent, and make ſupplication unto thee, ſaying (in a way of confeſſion and acknowledgment of their offences) we have ſinned and done perverſely, we have committed wickedneſs; and ſo return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their ſoul, and pray unto thee, then hear thou their prayer and ſupplication, and forgive thy people that have ſinned againſt thee, and all their tranſgreſſions wherein they have tranſgreſſed againſt thee," 1 Kings viii. 38—46.—What was the anſwer of God to this requeſt, we may learn from 2 Chron. vii. 14. "If my people ſhall humble themſelves and pray, and ſeek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their ſin." In perfect harmony with which, we hear the wiſe man telling us in his book of Proverbs, "Whoſo covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper, but he that confeſſeth and forſaketh them ſhall find mercy," xxviii. 13. From all which it is moſt juſt and natural to infer the indiſpenſible neceſſity of this gracious temper of mind.

Beſides,

Besides, not to confess our sins, is practically to deny that we have any: it is in fact as much as to say, we have no sin. And as he that believeth not the record that God hath given of his Son, makes him a liar; so doth he, who confesseth not his sin to God; in that he in practice denies what God hath declared in his word, that there is no man who liveth and sinneth not: and that if we say, either in practice or profession, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Nor must we ever forget that it is in this way of confession that every penitent sinner is brought to give glory to God †; heartily to acknowledge his holiness, as a sin-hating God; to express his approbation of that law which denounces an eternal curse against

† "We should propose unto ourselves in our confession, the setting forth of God's glory, and this should be the end of it. If it were not for this end, God would not accept it, neither should "we have good of it." The more we humble ourselves to magnify God, the more we do our duty, and the more we shall taste of his mercy."

Bishop Lake.

ſin; and to ſubmit to that juſtice which is engaged to execute vengeance upon thoſe who are found guilty of it. And therefore, when the children of Iſrael had committed a treſpaſs in the accurſed thing, and the anger of the Lord was kindled againſt them, ſo as to ſuffer them to be ſmitten at Ai before their enemies; upon which, when Joſhua had inquired of the Lord, and ſaid, "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore haſt thou ſuffered us to be ſmitten?" and was informed, that there was an accurſed thing in the camp, and that this was the reaſon why they could not ſtand before their enemies.—And when Achan was found to have been the aggreſſor, Joſhua ſaid unto him, "My ſon, give I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Iſrael;" How? "And make confeſſion unto him. Give glory to his omniſcience, from which no ſecrets can be hid; confeſs thy ſin, its evil, its guilt; own it, and take the ſhame of it to thyſelf; acknowledge the righteouſneſs of God in diſcovering it, and the juſtice of God in puniſhing it." And Achan anſwered and ſaid, "Indeed I have ſinned againſt the

Lord

Lord God of Iſrael, and thus and thus have I done;" making the moſt ſincere and ingenuous confeſſion of the crime in which he had treſpaſſed. Joſhua vii.

And indeed if we ſearch the ſcriptures of infallible truth, we ſhall be taught, that thoſe who in every age have been moſt eminent for their piety and holineſs, have, among other things, diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their exerciſe of this gracious diſpoſition of heart.

See the royal prophet, from a ſpiritual ſight of that God whom all the angelic hoſts adore for his eſſential holineſs, and before whom they veil their faces and cover their feet, as filled with the deepeſt confuſion and ſelf-abaſement in his preſence—ſee him confeſſing his ſinfulneſs and deſert in that moſt pathetic exclamation, "Wo is me, for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips." Hereby acknowledging his vileneſs to be of ſuch a nature, as to rend r his acceptance into the favor of God, and his admiſſion into heaven, morally impoſſible: and impoſſible it muſt

have been, but for that blood which cleanſeth from all ſin, Iſa. vi. 1 John i. 7.

Nor was this diſpoſition leſs in exerciſe in that perfect and upright man, who feared God and eſchewed evil, when it broke forth in a ſtrain ſo humiliating, and ſo derogatory to the fancied dignity of human nature, as that which is left upon record in Job xl. 3, 4. where we find the good man, who in the heat of controverſy, and in an unguarded hour, had ſaid, that his righteouſneſs was more than God's, now humbled in the very duſt before him, and confeſſing his impiety and his ſin; "then Job anſwered the Lord and ſaid, Behold I am vile ‡."

We have alſo a beautiful illuſtration of this point in the hiſtory of Daniel; who, when he heard that the Lord would accompliſh ſeventy years in the deſolation of Jeruſalem, prayed unto his God, and made

‡ The words indeed are few, but may ſerve to exhibit a great truth, viz. that while the hypocrite expreſſes more than he feels, the ſincere confeſſor will always feel more than he can expreſs.

confeſſion

confeſſion unto him, and ſaid, "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, we have ſinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts. O Lord, to us belongeth confuſion of face, becauſe we have ſinned againſt thee: yea, all Iſrael have tranſgreſſed thy law, therefore the curſe is poured upon us, and therefore hath the Lord brought this evil upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we have not obeyed his voice." Thus did this holy man of God confeſs his ſin, and the ſin of the people of Iſrael, owning its ſinfulneſs, and acknowledging its juſt deſert of God's wrath and indignation.

So that if there be any impiety in practically denying what God has poſitively aſſerted; or if it be right and fit that ſinful creatures ſhould give glory to God; or if the example of good men be any argument for the propriety of a thing; no one can doubt but that confeſſion of ſin to God is a moſt indiſpenſable duty. If we know

theſe things, happy are we if we do them. In order to which, proceed we,

II. To inquire, wherein the nature of true confeſſion conſiſts.

Every thing in the ſpiritual, as well as in the natural and moral world, has its counterfeit: there are very ſpecious and deluſive imitations of every chriſtian grace, as well as of every moral virtue. All that glitters is not gold. And they who make the ſtrongeſt pretenſions to, and in their external conduct carry the greateſt *appearances* of what is truly excellent, are often found moſt deſtitute of the *reality*.

Hence ariſes the expediency of diſtinguiſhing between falſe and true in religious, as well as in civil concerns: the propriety of which, with regard to the ſubject in hand, is too glaring to need any other proof than what may be derived from the ſeveral hiſtories of Pharoah, Saul, Shimei, and Balaam. What confeſſions were at different times extorted from each of theſe men, either by the awful judgments of God, or

elſe

elſe by the force of natural conſcience! but how inſincere, how feigned, how void of all grace they were, their ſad end too awfully evinces.

True confeſſion then implies in its very nature, a ſight of the great evil of our ſins, as committed againſt a God of infinite purity in himſelf, and of unſpeakable goodneſs to us; and who therefore ought to be loved with all our hearts, and ſerved in every moment of our lives—a feeling ſenſe of that wrath which is denounced againſt us for having ſinned againſt ſuch a God, and againſt ſo many mercies—together with an hearty acknowledgment of our deſerving all that puniſhment, which God hath been pleaſed to connect with the tranſgreſſions of his rebellious creatures. Where theſe are wanting, ſincere confeſſion of ſin is never likely to take place; as where there is no cauſe, there cannot be any effect.

It is one diſtinguiſhing mark of that confeſſion of ſin which is unto ſalvation, and by which it is to be known from what is falſe, that it is perſonal and particular. To hear mankind confeſs in general, "To be

ſure we are all ſinners, there are none of us without ſin," is no uncommon thing. This is a ſtile which the moſt profane and abandoned are frequently adopting. And I know of none who are not ready to join with them in it, excepting a few deluded viſionaries, who have ignorance or pride enough to fancy themſelves ſinleſsly perfect. "But if we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us." However, a general confeſſion of ſin may eſſentially differ from that which is gracious and ſaving, and whoſe language is with perſonal application to the ſubject of it, *I* have ſinned againſt the Lord. David did not think it ſufficient to acknowledge that the whole human race were ſinners; but as if he ſtood alone in the world, and was the only offender in it, he ſays, "I acknowledge *my* tranſgreſſions; and *my* ſin is ever before me."

The poor Publican, ſpoken of by St. Luke, could be no ſtranger to the character and conduct of thoſe who were occupied in the ſame employment as himſelf: but as if ignorant of the vileneſs of every character but his own, as

if

ſf unacquainted with the conduct of all beſide himſelf, overwhelmed at the ſight of his exceeding wickedneſs, in the bitterneſs of his ſoul he cries out, "God be merciful to *Me* a *Sinner*." He was too much engaged with the pungent ſenſe he had of his particular guilt, to ſatisfy himſelf with the conſideration that there were many ſinners beſide him, and, it may be, equally vile. His own offences had left too deep an impreſſion upon his mind, to ſuffer him to be eaſy, but in making this perſonal confeſſion of them.

The bleſſed apoſtle Paul knew very well that there were many perſecutors of the diſciples of Chriſt; many blaſphemers of his doctrine and perſon; many who were as injurious to the cauſe of God and truth, as he had been. But, as if he were the only one, we hear him confeſſing before God and man, and ſaying, "*I* was a blaſphemer, *I* was a perſecuter, *I* was injurious."

Nor can I forbear to mention that remarkable occurrence to this purpoſe, in the hiſtory of the penman of this inſtructive Pſalm; who, when the Lord ſent an angel unto

unto Jerusalem to destroy it, for the offence that he had committed in numbering the children of Israel; when David lift up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth with a drawn sword in his hand stretched over Jerusalem, he said unto God, "Is it not *I* that commanded the people to be numbered? even *I* it is who have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be upon *me*, and not upon thy people, that they should be plagued," 1 Chron. i. 21.

Genuine confession of sin is free, and full, and ingenuous, without any desire to cloak or extenuate the guilt of it. The generality of mankind naturally inherit the spirit of their first parents: they are too apt to make apologies for their sins, and to throw the blame upon any thing and any one, rather than themselves. When Adam heard the voice of the Lord in the garden, he fled; when he found his flight was in vain, and the Lord called unto him, and said, "What hast thou done?" so great was his pride, so base his ingratitude, that he chose

rather

rather to reflect upon God than upon himself; and instead of repenting and confessing with that humility which became him, he returns for answer, "The woman that Thou gavest to be with me, *She* gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Thus attempting to offer some excuse for his sin, instead of confessing it. And as if this were a temper peculiar to a fallen creature, when the great God put the same question to the woman, we hear her replying, "The *Serpent* beguiled me, and I did eat." Both alike backward to acknowledge their sin, and to take the shame of it to themselves. And so it is with all their posterity, the perverse offspring of rebellious parents. All are for referring to their situations in life, their peculiar temptations, the custom of the times, and the wickedness of others, as an apology at least, if not a plea, for their iniquities.

Not so the true confessor. "I acknowledge my transgression, in all its impurity, as an act of the vilest uncleanness; in all its iniquity, as an act of the grossest injustice; in all its impiety, as a most heinous offence against the God of heaven;" was, without

all

all controverſy, the temper of the royal penitent, when he uttered the words of the text. A temper, for which the great apoſtle of the Gentiles was moſt eminent. See him in the preſence of king Agrippa, and the whole council who were gathered together to ſit in judgment upon him, ingenuouſly confeſſing in the open court, that he once thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus. "Which thing I alſo did in Jeruſalem," ſays he; "and many of the ſaints did I ſhut up in priſon, having received authority from the chief prieſts; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice againſt them." And he adds, "I puniſhed them oft in every ſynagogue, and compelled them to blaſpheme. And being exceedingly mad againſt them, I perſecuted them even unto ſtrange cities," Acts xxvi. What a free, honeſt, and ingenuous confeſſion was here! And when he is writing to his ſon Timothy, we find him ſtiling himſelf the *Chief of Sinners:* and holding himſelf forth as ſo great a monument of God's pardoning mercy, that none after him need deſpair. Nay,

and

and when he is ſpeaking of the high office to which God had been pleaſed in his ſovereign grace to call him, he confeſſes, that he is the leaſt of the apoſtles, that he was not worthy to be ranked among them, or to bear the honorable title, becauſe he had formerly perſecuted the church of God. In all which we have preſented before us, the nature of this eſſential part of true repentance, Confeſſion of Sin. It acknowledges with David, that "righteouſneſs belongeth unto God, but unto us confuſion of face." It leads the happy partaker of it, like Benhadad and his ſervants to king Ahab, with ropes about their necks, to the footſtool of divine mercy, acknowledging their guilt, without urging any thing to extenuate its greatneſs; and as humble ſuppliants to ſeek for that pardon which they can never deſerve, but which they pray to receive. And this, not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth; not in the form without the power; but like thoſe who ſpeak out of the abundance of their hearts; who ſmite upon their guilty breaſts, and ſay with him of old, "O my God,

God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face unto Thee."

It is an *holy*, as well as an honest confession of sin, that constitutes it gracious and sincere. To acknowledge a thing to be really evil, and to embrace it as if it were otherwise, is a striking proof of insincerity. And therefore an heart-aversion from sin, and an unfeigned resolution against the practice of it in all its forms, can never be separated from genuine confession. In this point, all counterfeits fall short. How often did Pharaoh acknowledge his guilt to Moses, when the judgments of God were upon him! But what then? The moment the Lord withdrew the rod of his anger, how the impious rebel hardened his heart, and sinned yet more and more! Read the history of Saul, who, though the Lord gave him another heart, was a stranger to what the sacred writings call a new heart. Follow him through the several incidents of his life, after he was raised to the throne of Israel. See him most ungenerously persecuting the poor and innocent David. We shall find him under certain circumstances,

confessing

confeſſing even with tears, his exceeding baſeneſs in thus diſtreſſing an innocent man: but the inſincerity of his heart ſoon diſcovered itſelf, in that his conduct gave the lie to his confeſſion. And therefore, when Iſrael had treſpaſſed againſt the Lord, and the wrath of the Lord was upon them for having taken ſtrange wives, Ezra the prieſt ſtood up and charged them with the ſin they had committed, and commanded them in the name of the Lord, not only to make confeſſion unto the God of their fathers, but to ſeparate themſelves from the people of the land, and from the ſtrange wives: intimating thereby, that the ſincerity of confeſſing could only be proved by actually forſaking ſin. Ezra x. 10.

But after all, though it be true that it is eſſential to the nature of confeſſion of ſin, that it be particular, ingenuous, hearty, and holy, yet it is never attended with deſpair; but with an humble hope in the mercy of God, through the merit of a dear Redeemer. Balaam confeſſed, "I have ſinned againſt the Lord;" but it does not appear that it was with any expectation of forgive-

neſs

neſs through the atoning blood of Jeſus. So Judas again; "I have ſinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood;" but that he had no hope in that blood is too evident, for he went out and hanged himſelf. Whereas, what is the language of gracious confeſſion? "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveneſſes, though we have rebelled againſt him. I acknowledge my tranſgreſſions;" but "have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies." A beautiful illuſtration of which we are favored with in the ceremonial œconomy, where the high-prieſt is commanded to lay both his hands upon the head of a live goat, and to confeſs over him *all* the iniquities of the children of Iſrael, and *all* their tranſgreſſions in *all* their ſins, putting them upon the head of the goat; and the goat ſhall bear upon him *all* their iniquities. The goſpel of which is, that every penitent confeſſor ſhall not only acknowledge his iniquities, tranſgreſſions, and ſins before God, but that, while his heart is truly humbled under a ſenſe of them, his eye ſhall be fixed upon that glorious

rious object here typified, who bore all the iniquities of his people in his own body upon the accurſed tree. Lev. xvi. 21, 22.

Such is the nature of true confeſſion of ſin, as it relates to chriſtian experience. It remains that we conſider,

III. The ineſtimable bleſſing ariſing from it.

However difficult and unpleaſing the path of duty may at firſt ſight appear, there is ſomething to be ſaid in its favor, which is ſufficient to compenſate for all; which is, that it will certainly bring a man peace at the laſt. It is a ſure, though it may be a thorny road, to ſolid and abiding happineſs. There is no exerciſe of true religion, but what will neceſſarily lead the ſoul to real comfort in the end. A motive which ought to prevail upon every rational mind to walk in wiſdom's ways; and among others, in the way of true confeſſion, ſince the bleſſings which reſult from it are ſo many, and ſo great. Not as if true confeſſion were the procuring cauſe of them, but becauſe it hath pleaſed God to connect ſuch bleſſings

with this temper and disposition of heart. This is his appointed method of bringing his people to the possession and enjoyment of them.

As sin is the fruitful source of all our real miseries, if the cause be removed, the effect must cease: if our sins be forgiven, all our sorrows are in fact done away. Now this privilege of free and full remission of sin, is promised to every penitent confessor. Hear the language of one who rejoiced in the comfort of this precious truth. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee," Psalm xxxii. Hear the express testimony of the wise man; "Whoso covereth his sins, shall not prosper; but he that *confesseth* and *forsaketh* them, shall find mercy," Prov. xxviii. 13.

When the inspired penman of the book of Job is speaking upon this subject, and describing at large the state and feelings of a soul awakened to a sense of his guilt, misery,

ſery, and danger, on account of his ſinfulneſs; he tells us, what we ſee confirmed in the experience of every penitent, that "he ſhall pray unto God, and he will be favorable to him, and he ſhall ſee his face with joy: for he looketh upon men; and if any ſay, I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his ſoul from going into the pit, and his life ſhall ſee the light. He ſhall eſcape the wrath to come, which his ſins have deſerved, and ſhall be admitted to the preſence and enjoyment of God, which his ſins had forfeited," Job xxxiii. 26.

We have another valuable evidence for this truth, that we through faith in, and comfort of the ſcriptures might have hope, in 2 Chron. vi. 36. and which bears a very favorable aſpect to thoſe among God's profeſſing people, who have contracted freſh guilt upon their conſciences by ſinning againſt him. "If thy people ſin againſt thee," ſays the royal perſon, who is uttering the words before the great God, "and thou be angry with them; yet, if they bethink themſelves, and turn, and pray unto thee,

ſaying, We have ſinned, we have done amiſs, and have dealt wickedly; if they return to thee with all their heart, and with all their ſoul, then hear thou their prayer and ſupplications, and forgive thy people which have ſinned againſt thee." And the Lord ſaid, "If my people ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their ſin," 2 Chron. vii. 14. So true and inconteſtable is that declaration of the apoſtle's, "If we confeſs our ſins, God is faithful, for he hath promiſed, and juſt, for Chriſt hath ſuffered and died, that he might be juſt in forgiving us our ſins, and in cleanſing us from all unrighteouſneſs," 1 John i. 9.

From all which we may learn, that God's gracious deſign in humbling a ſinner, in making him deeply ſenſible of, and heartily ſorry for his miſdoings, in bringing him to the acknowledgement of his demerit and ſinfulneſs, is in order to inveſt him with all thoſe bleſſings which are to make him holy and happy, here and for ever.

A P-

APPLICATION.

Use 1. In the improvement of this doctrine, I ſhall make uſe of it in the firſt place, In a way of reproof. It is a moſt lamentable truth, that the greater part of mankind never knew what it was to be really diſtreſſed on account of ſin, in their lives. They are in a ſtate of the moſt dreadful inſenſibility; careleſs and unconcerned, though they cannot tell but the next moment may hurry their guilty ſouls into a boundleſs eternity, into remedileſs perdition. Nay, ſome of them are ſo throughly ſtupefied, ſo *morally dead* in treſpaſſes and ſins, ſo regardleſs whether they are ſaved or damned, that though their conſciences aſſure them that if they die in their preſent condition, it were good for them never to have been born; ſin has gotten ſuch ſtrong hold of their hearts, that they will rather part with heaven, than with it. They will even ruſh headlong upon deſtruction; break through every impediment raiſed in their way to prevent it; and take

hell, as it were, by violence. Like Ahab of old, they hate every faithful Micaiah who warns them of their danger, and cautions them againſt it. Like the rebellious children, they refuſe to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely; and could even ſtone the prophet who is weeping tears of pity over their impending ruin. If Paul himſelf were preaching to them, like Feſtus, they would perhaps tell him, that he was beſide himſelf, and mad; or, with Felix, more politely take their leave of him for the preſent, and promiſe to liſten to him at a more convenient ſeaſon.

Sinner, for I know not to give flattering titles where we are all upon a level; ſinner, is this the language of thine apoſtate heart? Let me aſk thee, which is more mad, the Preacher who warns thee againſt a poſſible damnation, or the Hearer who makes light of it? The Herald, who proclaims deſtruction to every Rebel againſt his rightful Sovereign, or the Subject who perſeveres in his Rebellion, at the expence of his life? I am ſtanding forth as that Preacher, God help you to take the warning! Deſtruction

upon

upon deſtruction is proclaimed againſt every impenitent offender, againſt the crown and dignity of the great King of kings; may divine grace enable you to throw down your rebel arms at the footſtool of the throne of mercy, and with the ſpirit of true confeſſion to ſay, "I acknowledge my tranſgreſſions, I have ſinned againſt the Lord!" Nay, do not put it off. Delays are dangerous. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of ſalvation. And how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation!"

I am aware how very apt ſome people are to deſpiſe thoſe who are troubled for their ſins, and who are, with unfeigned humility, frequently confeſſing their vileneſs before God and men. They look upon them as the moſt abject, the meaneſt, and the moſt ignorant among mankind. But if Job, if David, if Daniel, if Paul, if theſe highly-favored ſervants of God were wiſe or happy, all who are deſtitute of their ſpirit muſt be both fooliſh and miſerable. And however you may diſlike to be claſſed among ſuch true confeſſors in this life, there is a time

approaching when your judgment concerning persons and things will alter exceedingly, and when conscience will extort from you a confession not the most pleasing; a copy of which is recorded, not indeed by the pen of divine inspiration, but of reason, 'That idol at whose shrine you affect to bow with such profound adoration.' For once, then, be consistent with yourselves, and attend to its voice. Reason itself will inform you of a certain awful moment when you will be a real confessor, though not a gracious one: for when the curtain of time shall drop, and shall hide from your enraptured view all the vain things that have charmed you most in the world, it shall present you with a scene that will strike you with equal horror and surprize; for, "then shall the righteous man stand with great boldness before the face of such as afflicted him; while the impenitent shall grone for anguish of spirit; and shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had some time in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honor. How is he numbered among

among the children of God, and his lot is among the ſaints!" Wiſd. v. 1.

But while ſome are too indifferent and profane to make any confeſſion at all, others, under the ſpecious pretence of acknowledging their iniquity, are only ſpeaking lies in hypocriſy. Elſe, how is it that ſo many are continually making confeſſion of the evil of ſin with their *lips*, whoſe *hearts* are entirely deſtitute of any feeling ſenſe of its bitterneſs; and who, in their conſtant practice, contradict their profeſſions! My brethren, let me intreat you to judge yourſelves, that you may not be condemned of the Lord. Is it indeed out of the abundance of your hearts that your mouths utter the following language; "Almighty and moſt merciful Father, we have erred and ſtrayed from thy ways like loſt ſheep; we have followed too much the devices and deſires of our own hearts; we have offended againſt thy holy laws; we have left undone the things which we ought to have done; and we have done the things which we ought not to have done; and there is *no* health in us. But thou, O Lord,

Lord, have mercy upon us miſerable offenders; ſpare thou them, O God, which confeſs their faults; reſtore thou them that are penitent; according to thy promiſes declared unto mankind in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord. And grant, O moſt merciful Father, for his ſake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and ſober life, to the glory of thy holy name?" Do you indeed conſider what you are ſaying in this addreſs to God? Are you really *ſenſible* of your own weakneſs and inſufficiency for every good thing? And is ſin your *burden* and *miſery?* And have you *no hope* in any thing but in the *mercy* of God promiſed to a penitent ſinner in Chriſt Jeſus? Remember, that God judgeth not according to the appearance. "I, the Lord, ſearch the *heart:*" and where this is wanting, our beſt ſacrifices are an abomination, and our holieſt duties only ſplendid ſins in his ſight. "This people draweth nigh to me with their lips, and honoreth me with their mouths, but their hearts are far from me:" therefore, "in vain do they worſhip me."

Use

Use 2. How far this doctrine has any relation to the comfort of those who are hearing me at this time, is another use which may be made of it.

All true consolation must necessarily arise from comparing our hearts with the word of God, and from inquiring whether our experience and feelings be indeed such as are peculiar to the people of God; and of whom it is said, "that they seek the Lord with their whole heart, and worship him in spirit and in truth."

Have you then clearly understood, and have you been really convinced, of the necessity and propriety of true confession of sin unto God? Are you experimentally acquainted with the nature of it, so as to acknowledge your own sinfulness, guilt, and danger, on account of the offences you have committed against the God that made you, and to whom you are indebted for every blessing you enjoy? Have you been brought in this temper of heart to the throne of grace, pleading for mercy and pardon through the blood of the Lamb? And is it in sincerity the unfeigned desire of

your

your ſoul, to forſake every evil way, and to have reſpect unto all God's commandments?

If you can reply in the affirmative to this, your conſcience alſo bearing witneſs in the Holy Ghoſt, then I have full authority from the word of God to aſſure you, that you are intitled to all the benefits and bleſſings which it hath pleaſed God in his infinite wiſdom and ſovereign grace, to connect with ſuch a diſpoſition of ſoul. May the God of all conſolation enable you to receive the truth, and to rejoice in all the ſpiritual comfort of it!

But what if I ſhould be ſpeaking to any, who after ſincere and hearty confeſſion of ſin in time paſt, have revolted and gone away backward; have forſaken the fountain of living waters, and have been hewing out unto themſelves broken ciſterns that can hold no water? O how ſhall I addreſs myſelf to thoſe among you whoſe conſciences teſtify againſt you, that "as a wife treacherouſly departeth from her huſband, ſo have you dealt very treacherouſly with the Lord?" Shall I tell you that there is no hope?

hope? God forbid! For thus ſaith the Lord, "Return thou backſliding Iſrael, and I will not cauſe mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, ſaith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only *acknowledge* thine iniquity, and ſee that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, ſaith the Lord. Return, ye backſliding children, and I will heal your backſlidings." O that you may accept the gracious invitation, and ſay, in the language of faith, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. We lie down in our ſhame, and our confuſion covereth us: for we have ſinned againſt the Lord." Jer. iii.

Use 3. Laſtly, Suffer the word of exhortation. Let me intreat the profeſſing people of God, who are now about to attend the ſolemn and precious ordinance before us, to examine themſelves, and ſo to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. "For as the benefit is great, if with a true *penitent heart*, and *lively faith*, we receive that holy ſacrament; for then we ſpiritually

eat

eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us; so is the danger great if we receive the same unworthily. Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent you truly of your sins; have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect love with all men; so shall you be meet partakers of these holy mysteries."

Beware then of hypocrisy and self-deceit, in your approaches to God. And as we are upon the subject of Confession, let me call for your particular attention to that most excellent and expressive one, contained in the communion-service of our church; and which every gracious communicant is taught to utter before God in the following words—and O that the Spirit of God may impress them upon all our hearts, when we say,

"Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men—we *acknowledge* and *bewail* our manifold sins and wickedness, which

which we from time to time *most grievously* have committed by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine Majesty, provoking *most justly* thy wrath and indignation against us. We do *earnestly repent*, and are *heartily sorry* for these our misdoings; the *remembrance* of them is *grievous* unto us, the *burden* of them is *intolerable*. Have *mercy* upon us, have *mercy* upon us, most merciful Father; for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life, to the honor and glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Is this indeed the language of thine heart, professing christian? Dost thou acknowledge and bewail thy manifold sins, as having deserved, *justly* deserved God's wrath? Dost thou *heartily repent* of them? And hast thou nothing to plead in hope of pardon, but the mercy of God through the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus?—If so, you know and feel more of the nature of true confession, than I can possibly describe; with your

heart

heart you believe unto justification, and with your mouth you make confession unto salvation. Hail thou, who art highly favored, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou! Go then with humble boldness to the throne of grace, and to the table of the Lord, that you may find a fresh sense of pardoning love upon your soul; draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, that you may receive out of the inexhaustible fulness that is laid up in Jesus, grace and strength to help you in every time of need. Go, and the Lord be with thee.

And now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER.

"Infinitely holy and merciful God, "who amidst all the glories with which "thou art surrounded in heaven, hast pro-"mised to draw nigh to them who draw "nigh to thee, and to hear the petitions of "them who approach thee in the dear Re-

"deemer's

"deemer's name; hear us, O Lord our "God, we moſt humbly beſeech thee, "who are now met together to worſhip be-"fore thee. We are not worthy indeed to "enter into thy preſence, or to offer up "unto thee any ſacrifice at all: but thy "property is always to have mercy. O "help us to plead with thee for an intereſt "in it, ſo as that we may be partakers of "all the benefits and bleſſings that flow "from it into the hearts of thoſe, whom "thou haſt ſet apart as veſſels of thy "mercy; and in whoſe ſalvation thou wilt "manifeſt the riches of thy mercy.

"Thou haſt told us in thy word, that "whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſin, "ſhall find mercy; and that if we confeſs "our ſins, God is faithful and juſt to for-"give us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from "all unrighteouſneſs. Teach us, O Lord, "by the power of thy divine and ſpecial "grace, with holy ſhame, with godly ſor-"row, and ingenuous grief, to make con-"feſſion of our tranſgreſſions unto thee: "may we acknowledge them in all their

"sinfulness, guilt, and aggravations, from "the very ground of our hearts. Suffer us "not to deceive ourselves with vain ex-"cuses; but give us, Lord, such a sight "and sense of the evil nature of sin, as "shall lay us low in the dust of humility, "with our hands upon our mouths, con-"fessing our guilt, and ashamed to lift up "our faces to that God whom we have "offended. For we have sinned and com-"mitted iniquity, and have done wickedly, "by departing from thy precepts, and by "rebelling against thy commandments. "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto "thee, but unto us confusion of face. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we "have turned every one to his own way. "Yet, O Lord most holy, O God most "mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, "enter not into judgment with us: though "we have indeed provoked thy wrath and "indignation against us, yet punish us not "according to our sins, neither reward us "according to our iniquities. Look not "upon our offences, but upon the face of

"thine

"thine anointed. Take away all iniquity,
"receive us graciouſly, ſo will we render
"thee the calves of our lips. Amidſt all
"our innumerable tranſgreſſions, for which
"we pray to abhor ourſelves, and un-
"feignedly to repent before thee, leave us
"not without hope: may we never forget
"that to the Lord our God belong mercies
"and forgiveneſſes, though we have re-
"belled againſt him. Though we are ſin-
"ful creatures, thou art a merciful God:
"though we are unworthy of mercy, yet
"thou forgiveſt ſin freely: though our ſins
"reach as high as heaven, yet thy mercies
"are above the heavens: and though we
"have multiplied our offences, thou canſt
"multiply thy pardons: and thou art able
"to do exceeding abundantly above all we
"can aſk or think. Therefore, O Lord,
"hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord,
"hearken and do: for we do not preſent
"our ſupplications before thee for our
"righteouſneſſes, but for thy great mercies,
"and in the name of the ſinner's Saviour,
"and the ſinner's Friend, Jeſus Chriſt:

"unto whom with thee, O Father, and "the Holy Ghoſt, may our hearts, lips, "and lives, unite in aſcribing equal "honour, glory, love, and praiſe, for "ever and ever." Amen.

SERMON

SERMON III.

PSALM li. 4.

AGAINST THEE, THEE ONLY HAVE I SINNED, AND DONE THIS EVIL IN THY SIGHT: THAT THOU MIGHTEST BE JUSTIFIED WHEN THOU SPEAKEST, AND BE CLEAR WHEN THOU JUDGEST.

'IT is wonderful, ſaith the great lord Clarendon in his Eſſays, that there is not one chriſtian in the world, how different ſoever in other opinions, who doth profeſs to have any hope of ſalvation without Repentance; and yet that there are ſo few who take any pains to be informed of it, or to know how to practiſe it.'

There never was an obſervation more ſuited to the genius of any age or people, than

this is to that in which we live. An universal inattention and neglect, not to say contempt, of religious matters, seem to have infected the human race. A serious man is become a pious phænomenon: and such a character strikes the generality of mankind with far greater surprize and admiration, than the appearance of a comet. One might imagine, that satan had held his court upon earth, and that the whole race of rationals had signed an agreement, and entered into a conspiracy, to oppose their heavenly Sovereign, and to ruin their own souls; were it not that we have a small company left, who are really convinced, that none are wise for time, who are fools for eternity.

A very essential part of true wisdom, consists in the practice of what the sacred writings call, Repentance: for however the profane, the polite, and the ignorant, may chuse to brand the thing implied under that term, with the odious names of folly, weakness, superstition, and melancholy; the wisdom of God has assured us, that the Prodigal's repentance was so far from being any evidence of his madness, that it

was

was the beſt proof he could give of his being in his right mind: when he *came to himſelf*, he ſaid, "I will riſe and go to my father, and will ſay, Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon." And we know who hath ſaid, "Except ye repent, ye ſhall all periſh." So that every one of us *muſt repent*, either here, or for ever.

'Repentance then, ſays the noble author I have juſt quoted, is a godly ſorrow for having done or committed ſomething that God hath forbidden to be done, or for having omitted to do ſomewhat that he hath commanded. Where there is no ſorrow, there can be no repentance; and where the ſorrow is not godly, there can be no true repentance.'

In this pſalm we have delineated before us, the compleat portraiture of the ſincere penitent: and the grace of repentance is exhibited to us in the moſt ſtriking, and evangelical colours. That part of it which has been hitherto examined, hath preſented us with a view of the royal penitent in the

attitude of deep humility, conſcious demerit, and unfeigned ſelf-abhorrence; acknowledging his vileneſs; expreſſing himſelf in the moſt ingenuous terms of grief and diſtreſs; and applying, as an object of pity, to the great Father of mercies, for compaſſion and relief.

That a ſenſe of the diſgrace he had incurred, and of the guilt he had brought upon his conſcience by the ſin he had committed, was not the ſole motive which urged his earneſt requeſt for mercy, is evident from the ſtile of our text: where we find him recollecting his iniquity, as an offence done to God; and viewing it in ſo heinous a light on that account, as to ſay, "Againſt *thee*, *thee only* have I done this evil in thy ſight." Which, as a pious commentator hath judiciouſly obſerved, 'is not to be underſtood ſimply and abſolutely; becauſe he had unqueſtionably ſinned againſt Bathſheba and Uriah, and many others who might be ſcandalized at it; but comparatively. And then the meaning is, Though I have ſinned againſt my own body and conſcience, and againſt others; yet

yet nothing is more grievous and terrible to me, than to consider that I have sinned against thee: partly, because this is the chief malignity and sinfulness of sin, that it offends the glorious and blessed God; and partly, because I sat thee at defiance; and having used all wicked arts to conceal my sins from men, I went on boldly in sin, casting off all reverence to thy holy Majesty, and all dread of thy judgments; and because I sinned against thee to whom I had such numerous, and peculiar, and eminent obligations. For these reasons I justify thee, O God, in all that thou hast spoken by thy prophet; I submit to all thy afflictive dispensations towards me, as the just desert of my transgressions against thee: and though I myself am the subject of thy punishment, I testify, that thou, Lord, art righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works. In thy greatest severity I can see a benignant display of covenant-mercy; and am obliged to acknowledge that thou hast punished me less than mine iniquities deserve.'

It

It is surely very natural to imagine the psalmist to have been in such a spirit as this, when he uttered the words before us; and they may serve to teach us the following articles in the history of true repentance:

I. That sin is to be lamented, not only on account of its misery, but as it is an offence against God.

II. That every christian, who is favored with this view of things, will justify God in whatever he hath spoken.

III. That it is the duty of every christian to acknowledge the righteousness of God, in those judgments which his sins have brought upon him.

While I am speaking upon these points, may divine wisdom be my guide, and may the holy Spirit be your instructor!

In the first place, then, we are to make it appear from the scriptures of truth, that sin is to be abhorred and lamented by us, not only as it has brought death into the world and all our woe, but as it is directly repugnant to the will of that great Sovereign,

reign, who ought to rule without the leaſt oppoſition.

Before the entrance of moral evil into the world, all was order, harmony, and peace. There was not one jarring ſtring, or a diſcordant note. Every part of creation kept its proper place, and all was in ſweet, intire ſubmiſſion to the Lord of all. God looked on all the works of his hands, and behold they were very good. This was holineſs; this was happineſs. Both which inſeparably and everlaſtingly unite.

But when that ugly monſter, Sin, inſinuated itſelf, and gained admiſſion, what tongue can deſcribe the miſeries it introduced! Miſeries, enough at leaſt to render it deteſtable to every conſiderate mind from principles of ſelf-love: while the regenerate ſoul is taught to look upon it with horror as an offence to God.

There is, it is allowed, a variety of reaſons for our hatred of ſin, which ought to have, and which undoubtedly will have their proper weight. No creature can be ſuppoſed to be in love with his own miſery, and to be in his right mind. Self-preſerva-

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tion is a law of nature, and which no gracious principles whatever can, or were intended to eradicate. The consideration therefore of the dreadful consequences of sin, ought to render it peculiarly odious in the sight of every reasonable creature, who means to pay any due attention to his own happiness. For who can seriously think of the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, and dispute for a moment whether sin is or is not to be lamented on this account? Who can really believe that the curse of offended Majesty is denounced against every soul of man, who doeth any evil, at any time, either in thought, word, or deed, as we find it expressly declared in Gal. iii. 10. "Cursed is *every One* that *continueth* not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to *do* them."—Who can really believe this, and yet say, that there is no just cause of mourning for sin, which is the transgression of the law, on account of the curse it brings upon the offender?

The

The good king Josiah we find was commended for this very thing. "Go, said the pious king, to Hilkiah the priest, and inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us." The answer of God to which was, "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, I have heard thee, saith the Lord." By which we are to understand how acceptable this spirit was in the sight of God.

And indeed, we find our blessed Lord making use of arguments, deduced from the laws of self-preservation, to restrain from the commission of evil. "Fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Nor did his apostle and minister fail to press the same arguments, and to follow the example of his blessed Master: "Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." Aware of those unutterable

terable agonies, repreſented to us under the awful images of the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never to be quenched; ſtruck with the thought of their unſpeakable diſtreſs, the ſmoke of whoſe torment aſcendeth up for ever and ever; touched with the tendereſt concern for my fellow-ſinners, leſt, like the unhappy Dives, they ſhould one day cry in vain for a drop of water to cool their tongues—we perſuade them to lay theſe things to heart; to conſider the fatal conſequences of rebelling againſt God; and to be prevailed upon to fly from the wrath to come.

At the ſame time that the ſtate of danger into which ſin is likely to bring our own perſons, is a great reaſon why it ought to be lamented; common benevolence ſhould teach us, that the injuries we may have done others by our ſins, is a juſt occaſion of grief and ſorrow; more eſpecially as our vicious conduct may have affected their eternal intereſts. And in this reſpect, whoſe heart does not reproach him! Whoſe conſcience does not ſay, "Thou art the man!" who either by thy authority, or example,

ample, or perſecution, haſt drawn others into ſin, and ſo encouraged them in provoking God, and helped them forward in the damnation of their ſouls! Come on, ſays the profane wretch, who hath learned to bid heaven defiance, and to neglect the one thing needful, let us enjoy the good things that are preſent: let us fill ourſelves with coſtly wine: let none of us go without his part of our voluptuouſneſs—thus ſinners entice each other into the road that leadeth to deſtruction. By their ſins they not only become ſpiritual ſuicides; they are not content with deſtroying their own ſouls, but they muſt, as much as in them lies, murder others alſo.

If the recollection of conduct like this ſhould revive upon the memory of any who have been brought to ſee the evil of it, can they poſſibly abſtain from grief? And will they not ſee another ſad cauſe of mourning for ſin? What! Is it nothing to you, that you have done ſomething towards the miſery of that poor wretch, who has paſſed through time into eternity, without any ſigns of true repentance? Is it nothing to you, that you

have

have had ſome hand in binding on him the everlaſting chains of darkneſs? that your company and converſation hardened him in his rebellion againſt God? Canſt thou reflect upon this, and not heave many a bitter ſigh for him, and for thyſelf? If not, thou muſt be loſt to all the feelings of humanity; thine heart muſt be like a ſtone; and thou haſt too much reaſon to fear, leſt thou become a fellow-commoner with him in hell, with whom thou haſt been a fellow-ſinner upon earth.

But yet, the chief reaſon why ſin ought to be lamented and abhorred is, becauſe of the offence done to God by it. Infidels and Deiſts, under pretence of having more refined and liberal ſentiments, have objected to the chriſtian religion, and its avowed advocates, the mean and diſingenuous motives upon which it is urged; the baſe and ſlaviſh principles of hope and fear upon which it is maintained. And indeed they have had too much occaſion given them, from the general ſtile of ſome preachers and writers in defence of it, to offer this objection. But it is exceedingly unwiſe to

judge

judge of a religion from the character of those who are strangers to the true nature of it, and who would perhaps pay no regard to it, were they not well paid for it; and who, instead of deriving their principles from the religion they profess, make that religion, at all events, square with their principles: which is universally the case with such as can rise to no higher motives than those of hope and fear. For though these must and will hold their proper place in the rational mind, yet they will not be the highest spring of action to which the renewed soul will attain. Because the true penitent has the eyes of his understanding enlightened to see the evil of sin, not only as it brings eternal punishment with it, but as it is an attempt to dishonor every attribute and perfection of the Godhead. In this view of it he is enabled to detest it and mourn for it. And it is this very thing which constitutes the essence of that "*godly* sorrow for sin, which worketh repentance unto salvation never to be repented of." Such a disposition at once proves itself to be supernatural, and frees the religion of

the Bible from the charge of being founded upon mean and beggarly principles.

That a temper ſo gracious is attainable by the real chriſtian, even in his preſent ſtate of imperfection, is confirmed to us by a circumſtance in the hiſtory of Joſeph. What was it that deterred that good man from the commiſſion of evil, when attacked by a violent temptation? Was it, that he was afraid of loſing his office, to which Providence had called him? Or was it, that he laid ſuch mighty ſtreſs upon his reputation? Or, did the fear of damnation prevail with him? The temper of his mind upon this occaſion, is deſcribed to us in theſe remarkable words uttered in reply to his miſtreſs's ſolicitations, "How ſhall I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin *againſt God!*"

It was David's grief that he had ſinned againſt God, even though he knew that the Lord had forgiven him. And we are told, that his deſign in meditating in the law of God day and night, and in hiding his words within his heart was, that he might not ſin againſt him. And this ſame

diſpoſition

disposition hath often melted the hearts of God's people with sorrow, though conscious at the same time of their being in his favor. And indeed, this is the principal thing which draws the line of distinction between true repentance and its counterfeit. An hypocrite may make a vast appearance of sorrow. Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; nevertheless it is said, his heart was not perfect with the Lord, because he did it not chiefly out of regard for him. Jehu may be very zealous in performing that which the Lord hath appointed; but if Jehu have not an eye to God in it, it is not the zeal of a christian. Even Saul shall weep for his offences; Ahab shall humble himself; and Judas shall repent; and all in vain; because destitute of this *godly sorrow*. A kind of sorrow, which the Lord hath engaged by his own grace to produce in the hearts of all his people, and which is so beautifully described in Zach. xii. 10. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall

look upon me whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn."

To evidence the neceſſity of this gracious temper it is, that judicious writers upon divine ſubjects have been ſo careful to preſerve the diſtinction between what they call *Legal* and *Evangelical* repentance. To illuſtrate which, it may not be uſeleſs to produce the ſubſequent ſpecimen from one of the moſt eminent among them.

'A *legal repentance* flows from an averſion to God and to his holy laws; but an *evangelical repentance* from love to both. The diſtreſs, the terror and amazement, that awakened ſinners are under, ariſe frequently from their dreadful apprehenſions of God, and of his terrible juſtice. They know that they have greatly provoked him, are afraid of his wrath, and therefore want ſome covert where they may hide themſelves from his preſence. They might before perhaps have ſome pleaſing apprehenſions of him, while they conſidered him as being ALL *mercy* without *juſtice*; and while they could hope for pardon, and yet live in their ſins. But now they have ſome ſenſe of the

holineſs

holineſs and juſtice of God, he appears an infinite enemy, and therefore moſt terrible to their ſouls. They are conſulting indeed ſome way to be at peace with him, becauſe they are afraid the controverſy will iſſue in their deſtruction. They reſolve upon new obedience, from the ſame motives that ſlaves obey their ſevere and tyrannical maſters; while the rule of their obedience is directly contrary to the bent, bias, and diſpoſition of their ſouls. Were the penalty of the law taken away, their averſion to it would quickly appear, and they would ſoon embrace their beloved luſts with the ſame pleaſure and delight as formerly. This is frequently exemplified in thoſe who wear off their convictions and reformations together, and, notwithſtanding all their former religious appearances, diſcover the alienation of their hearts from God and his law, by their ſenſual lives; and, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, ſhew themſelves enemies in their minds by their wicked works.'

'But, on the contrary, the ſincere goſpel-penitent ſees an admirable beauty and excellency in a life of holineſs, and

therefore grones after higher attainments in it. He is ſenſible how much he has tranſgreſſed the law of God, how very far he is departed from the purity and holineſs of the divine nature. *This is the burden of his ſoul.* Hence it is that he walks in heavineſs, and waters his couch with his tears. He mourns, not becauſe the *law* is ſo *ſtrict*, or the *penalty* ſo *ſevere*; Gal. iii. 10. for he eſteems the law to be holy, and the commandment holy, and juſt, and *good*; Rom. vii. 12. but he mourns that though the law be ſpiritual, he is carnal, ſold under ſin. He mourns, that his nature is ſo *contrary to God*, that his practice is ſo *contrary to his will*; and that he can make no better progreſs in mortifying the deeds of the fleſh, in regulating his affections, and in living to God. The true penitent is breathing with the ſame earneſtneſs after ſanctification, as after freedom from wrath. He does not want to have the law bend to his corruptions, but to have his heart and life fully ſubjected to the law and will of God. Oh, ſays he, what a wicked heart have I, that is ſo eſtranged from the holy nature of God,

God, and from his righteous law! What a guilty wretch have I been, who have walked so contrary to the glorious God, have trampled upon his excellent perfections, violated his holy law, and made so near an approach even to the nature of the devil!'—"Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight!"

II. Now when a disposition like this really takes place in the heart, and when a sinner is thus humbled under a sense of his sins, he will justify God in all his sayings, or in whatever he hath spoken in his blessed word.

The term justify, is made use of in divers significations in the sacred writings. It is spoken of Christ justifying man, by acquitting him before God of the guilt and punishment of sin, Isa. liii. 11.—of wisdom being justified of her children; that is, approved and honored by them, Mat. xi. 19.—and of God being justified by man, by believing what he saith, Luke vii. 29. In these latter senses I conceive, it may be useful and proper to understand the expression in the passage before us. "I ac-

knowlege my transgressions, in all their vileness, guilt, and demerit; I accuse myself, and would justify God in all that he hath spoken concerning me; so as not to dare to charge him foolishly, but to take all the shame to myself." Such we may suppose was the spirit of the psalmist, when he uttered the words of the text. And after this model will the heart of every true penitent be fashioned. He will justify God, and condemn himself; he will justify him in all that he hath spoken, and clear him when he judgeth.

To justify God, in the general temper of it, is undoubtedly to believe all that he hath been pleased to reveal in the book of divine inspiration, whether it relate to doctrine or precept, to promise or to threatening, however mysterious and unaccountable it may appear. Against this, human reason, and the natural heart of man, object. Some will not believe what they cannot comprehend; others, what cannot be demonstrated; others, what opposes their corrupt passions and inclinations; others, what militates against human pride and self-

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righteouſneſs; others, what muſt neceſſarily fill their guilty conſciences with the moſt alarming fears. Hence the denial of that ſublime, and incomprehenſible doctrine, of the Trinity in Unity, the three co-equal Perſons in one Jehovah; of the union of the two natures in the perſon of Chriſt; of the ſupernatural operations of the holy Spirit upon the ſoul, in order to ſaving knowlege, ſound converſion, unfeigned repentance, and true faith; of the atonement and ſatisfaction of the Lord Jeſus; of the neceſſity of a perfect righteouſneſs imputed to ſinners, in order to their redemption from hell, and admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven; and of the eternal duration of hell-torments. Human reaſon, unaſſiſted by divine illumination, will be found more or leſs rejecting theſe fundamental truths of ſacred writ.

Now the only cure of this ſpirit of infidelity, is that ſpirit which influences the real chriſtian; whom the myſteriouſneſs of any doctrine will not cauſe to deny its truth, but who ſtands like the holy man of old at the brink of what is unfathomable

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in divine revelation, and cries out, O the depth of the wisdom and knowlege of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! This is right reason; reason purified, refined, exalted! For what can be more rational, than for a finite being to submit to, and admire the incomprehensible conduct of infinite wisdom? What more judicious or learned, than for creatures of a day to bow with the deepest humility before the eternal God, who giveth not account of any of his matters? What more fit than to say with him of old, "Once have I spoken, yea twice, but I will proceed no farther."—

Not deeply to discern, nor much to know;
Mankind was born to wonder and adore.

This is the spirit that leads its possessor into sweet obedience to every precept enjoined in the word of God, nowithstanding the difficult circumstances which may attend the performance of it. When the unrenewed

unrenewed mind is commanded to caſt away every thing offenſive to God, though it were as dear as the right eye, or as valuable as the right hand; when it is told, that whoſoever will be a diſciple of Jeſus muſt deny himſelf, take up his croſs daily, and follow his maſter through evil report and good report, nay, and forſake every thing that would come in competition with the ſupreme love of him—It ſtarts, it rebels, it turns back, and replies, This is a hard ſaying, who can hear it! But let Abraham be ordered to take his ſon; his only ſon; the ſon of promiſe; and offer him up; and that with his own hand; amidſt all the oppoſitions which nature and reaſon could poſſibly raiſe againſt it, Abraham obeys; he knew that the Judge of all the earth would do right: he juſtified God, notwithſtanding the ſtrange appearance of ſuch an act in the ſight of human judgment; he was † ſtrengthened in faith, and gave glory to God, in that he with-held not his ſon, his only ſon, from him.

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† *Was ſtrengthened*, as it may be read in Rom. iv. 20.

Nor

Nor was his conduct less remarkable in the birth of his Isaac. God had promised him a child when Sarah was past bearing. Sarah very naturally smiled at the apparent improbability; but Abraham believed God, in hope against hope. He justified his power, faithfulness and truth; knowing that what God had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore he was called the friend of God. And thus will it be with every friend of God; with all who walk in the steps of the faith of their father Abraham. Neither the mysteriousness of any doctrine, nor the difficulty of any command, nor the seeming impossibility of the performance of any promise, nor the severity of any threatening, which God hath been pleased to publish in the scriptures, will prevail upon them to reject the doctrine, despise the command, disbelieve the promise, or deny the threatening.

But to justify God, is not only to believe what he hath spoken, which the very devils do, but also to *allow* and *approve* of it as *excellent* and *right*. Otherwise we may believe what we disgust, and credit what we abhor:

abhor: as is undoubtedly the caſe with thoſe who are bound in everlaſting chains of darkneſs. We muſt therefore approve of every truth, ſo as to receive it in the love of it; ſo as to value it, and to be valiant for it; earneſtly, though meekly, to contend for the faith delivered to the ſaints; and not to be aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt, knowing that it is the moſt ineſtimable treaſure upon earth, and the power of God unto ſalvation to every one that believeth. We muſt eſteem all the precepts of God concerning all things to be right; acknowledge that the law in all its ſpotleſs purity, unchanging perfection, and exceeding ſpirituality; as reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, as demanding ſinleſs obedience, and condemning for every offence with an eternal curſe, is holy, and juſt, and good:—we muſt have reſpect to all God's commandments, by taking greater delight in them than in all manner of riches: that while the covetous are waſting their time and exerting their every power in the purſuit of periſhing wealth; while the ambitious are ſoaring after the empty ſhadows of earthly

honors;

honors; and the sensualist is contented to be a fellow-commoner with the beasts, and to know no higher delight, than what consists in fleshly gratifications; we may be enabled to say, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb," Psalm xix. 8—10.

To justify God, is to embrace the promises he hath made to believers as the foundation of our hope, and the soul of our comfort. These are the conduits through which divine consolation and peace flow into the heart. They are the spiritual balm for the wounded conscience. They are the christian's only support while in the furnace of affliction, or in the fire of temptation. The covenant of promise, is the charter of his privileges. This charter is safely preserved in the hands of his glorious Head, Christ Jesus; in whom are all the promises of God, yea and amen; and therefore sure to all the seed. God hath made them, and confirmed them by an oath; Christ hath engaged to see them all fulfilled;

filled; and therefore the real christian justifies God in deriving all his happiness from them. And while through patience and comfort of the promises he has hope and joy, the fear of God's threatenings is in his heart that he may not depart from him.

Thus to justify God, is at once the cure of error and infidelity, the death-wound of self-righteousness, and the destruction of immorality. It brings human reason into due submission to divine revelation; it makes human righteousness fall before the divine righteousness, like Dagon before the ark of God; it sets up true happiness in the place of all the delusions of imaginary bliss; and it dethrones those corrupt and degenerate principles, which before reigned within the heart, and endangered its eternal interests.

But there remains still another circumstance, in which the grace of God distinguishes itself in every regenerate soul, in every truly penitent and humble heart, which is,

III. That

III. That it will juſtify God in all the judgments he is pleaſed to inflict upon it on account of ſin.

When Cain had ſinned againſt the Lord, we do not hear of any relentings of heart, any diſtreſs of conſcience, any pious acknowlegement he made to God. The miſery which his ſin had brought upon him, was however ſenſibly felt. Though he was deſtitute of every ſpark of divine love, and brotherly affection, yet there was left within him a principle of ſelf-love; and therefore, when the great God paſſed that awful ſentence upon him, "And now art thou curſed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. A fugitive and a vagabond ſhalt thou be upon the earth."—What was his reply? "And Cain ſaid unto the Lord, My puniſhment is greater than I can bear." Thus reproaching and affronting the juſtice of God, and complaining, not of the greatneſs of his ſin, but of the ſeverity of the puniſhment. Inſtead of juſtifying God in the ſentence, he condemns him; inſtead of accepting the pu-

punishment of his iniquity, he repines at it; instead of accusing himself for so black a crime, he only laments the distressing state into which it had brought him. "For behold, says he, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth, I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond, and it shall come to pass, that whosoever findeth me shall slay me," Gen. iv.

So again, when it pleased the Lord to visit the rebellious king of Egypt with many and sore judgments, we never find him acknowleging the justice and righteousness of God in these dispensations. A confession of his sin was indeed extorted from him; but it was the punishment of it, and not the offence, that he lamented. Whereas it is in the heart of every converted sinner to bow before the hand that chastises him, and to own, that "the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

As a striking elucidation of this remark, let us have recourse to a particular circumstance in the history of good old Eli. It was revealed by the Lord to the prophet

Samuel, "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of them that hear it shall tingle. For I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons behaved themselves vile, and he restrained them not." When Samuel informed Eli of this, how did the good old man receive the sad tidings? Did he, like Cain, murmur and rebel? Or, like Pharoah in his address to Moses, beg of the prophet to intreat the Lord to revoke the sentence, and to remove the punishment? Did he, like one who has no refuge to fly to in his distress, beat his breasts, tear his hair, and stamp upon the earth? On the contrary, see with what holy composure, and pious resignation he bears the sorrowful news; he submits to the sentence, complains not of the punishment, nor utters a repining word. Was it for want of natural affection? Shall we ascribe it to a monkish apathy, or stoical insensibility? Shall we suppose him to have been destitute

of

of parental feelings? Alas! his inordinate love for his children was his misfortune and his fault. But amidst all, he was possessed of that grace which taught him to love God above all, and therefore we hear him saying, "It is the Lord." "It is he who pronounces the judgment, from whose bar there lies no appeal, and against whose sentence there lies no exception; it is he that will execute the judgment, whose power cannot be resisted, his justice arraigned, or his sovereignty contested. It is the Lord, who will thus glorify himself; and it is highly fit he should. It is the Lord, with whom there is no unrighteousness; who never did, nor ever will do any wrong to any of his creatures, nor exact more than their iniquity deserves. Let him do what seemeth him best. I have nothing to say against his proceedings; he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, and therefore his will be done. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him," * 1 Sam. iii.

* Henry in loc.

Similar to this the ſcriptures have indulged us with another pattern of excellent ſubmiſſion to the divine will in afflicting providences. For when Nadab and Abihu, the ſons of Aaron, offered ſtrange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not; there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. As Moſes was preſent upon this occaſion, he endeavored to reconcile Aaron to this trying diſpenſation. And what was the argument that he made uſe of for that purpoſe? "Then Moſes ſaid unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord ſpake, ſaying, I will be ſanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." And what effect had this upon the ſufferer? Did it at all counteract the workings of corrupt nature? Did it allay the rebellious riſings of fatherly affection? "Aaron held his peace." He juſtified God in his word and in his works. He patiently acquieſced in the ſevere ſtroke; he became dumb, and opened not his mouth, becauſe GOD did it, Lev. x.

After

After him we find the good king Hezekiah following his pious example. For when he was left to himſelf, to humble him and to prove him, and to ſhew him what was in his heart, we ſee what human nature is without the grace of God. Such was his weakneſs, notwithſtanding his knowlege of God, his zeal for his glory, and his unfeigned devotedneſs to him in time paſt; though a peculiar and miraculous diſplay of mercy ought to have been freſh upon his memory; yet, when the king of Babylon ſent letters and a preſent to him to congratulate him upon his recovery, inſtead of giving that glory to God which was ſo due to him, and inſtead of talking of all his wondrous works, he thought of nothing but how to gratify the pride and vanity of his fooliſh mind. To this end, he entertains the ambaſſadors with a deſcant upon the grandeur of his palace, the elegance of his furniture, his valuable collection of paintings, his rare curioſities, his extenſive treaſures, his beautiful armory, and every other precious thing that he had.

Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth; and generally scourgeth those most, whom he loveth best; for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness. No wonder therefore, if the Lord sent Isaiah to him with this message, "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and all that thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." Thus he was to read his sin in his punishment. What a mortifying lecture was this to the pride of king Hezekiah! To think that his enemy should one day possess what he now so unhappily boasted in; and that the royal seed should be servants to the king of Babylon! How agonizing the idea, to one who was valuing himself upon the dignity of his rank, the nobility of his blood, and the abundance of his wealth! And yet, how did grace teach him to bear it! Though the just man falleth he riseth again, and, like

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the ſun, often ſets to appear the brighter when he riſes. For however grating the apprehenſion might be to human ambition, however oppoſite to fleſh and blood, then ſaid Hezekiah to Iſaiah, "Good is the word of the Lord which thou haſt ſpoken." He ſaw his ſin, confeſſed his guilt, and approved of that juſtice which thought proper to inflict ſuch a puniſhment upon his offence. He juſtified God and condemned himſelf.

That the penman of this pſalm before us was no ſtranger to this gracious diſpoſition, is very evident from thoſe memorable anecdotes of uncommon ſubmiſſion to God under his afflicting rod, recorded in 2 Sam. 15th and 16th chapters. In the former of which, we are made acquainted with the unnatural rebellion of his ſon Abſalom, who ſtole the hearts of the men of Iſrael from their rightful ſovereign, and then entered into a conſpiracy againſt him. How amiable does the king of Iſrael appear, when in the midſt of all his troubles he directs himſelf to Zadok the prieſt and ſays, "Carry back the ark of God into the city

(from whence the cruel perſecution of Abſalom had compelled him to retire) if I ſhall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and ſhew me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus ſay, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as ſeemeth good to him." —In the latter, is exhibited before us the power of divine grace, operating ſo effectually in the heart, as intirely to ſubdue all that ſpirit of revenge, which is ſo natural and ſweet to an unrenewed mind. For when king David was come to Bahurim, there met him a man of the family of the houſe of Saul, Shimei by name, and he curſed him, and ſaid, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial." Then ſaid Abiſhai unto the king, ſtruck with a noble and generous reſentment of the indignity offered to the perſon of his royal maſter, "Why ſhould this dead dog curſe my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." And the king ſaid, "So let him curſe, becauſe the Lord hath ſaid unto him, Curſe David. Who ſhall then ſay, Wherefore

haſt

haſt thou done ſo?" In all probability David's heart ſmote him for the blood of Uriah which he had ſhed; conſcious of what he deſerved, and of what God had promiſed to inflict upon him, he poſſeſſed his ſoul in patience, and kiſſed the chaſtening rod.

And to convince us how nearly true grace and this view of things are allied in every chriſtian character, we find, that when the Lord had brought the Jews into that diſtreſſing ſtate, of which for their ſins he had warned them by their prophets; Nehemiah, though in captivity, and a fellow-ſufferer with them, could look up to God, and ſay, "Howbeit, thou art juſt in all that is brought upon us; for thou haſt done right, but we have done wickedly." Nehem. ix. 33. So certain is it that every perſon who is poſſeſſed of true humility, and who walks humbly with his God, will juſtify him in all the judgments which it ſhall pleaſe God to execute upon him.

Let us now recapitulate what hath been delivered, in two or three practical obſervations.

Obs. 1. How few real christians and true penitents are there in the world! In the world did I say? alas! How few perhaps, even among those to whom I am addressing myself at this time, and who are circumscribed within this small spot of our globe! A little exercise, in a way of personal application, may serve to convince you of it.

If the name and the nature of a thing were of equal import, it might be uncharitable in me to suspect your being indeed what you profess; but it is not so. You have heard an essential part of the character of a real christian particularly, and, if I mistake not, scripturally described to you. He is one, whose heart is affected with, and ingenuously humbled under a sense of the vileness of his sins, not only as bringing upon him swift destruction as to their desert, but as they are an offence to the holy nature and righteous will of the blessed God. He is one, who justifies God in all that he hath spoken in his word, whether it respect doctrine or precept, threatening or promise, and that so as to receive, admire, adore,

adore, and obey. And ſuch is his conviction of the evil of ſin; and ſo conſcious is he of his own demerit on account of it; that in all the afflictions with which it ſhall be the pleaſure of the moſt High to viſit him, his murmurings are ſilenced; his hand is upon his mouth; his mouth is in the duſt; and if there be a thought conceived in his mind, it may be expreſſed in the following language; "Out of the mouth of the moſt High proceedeth not good and evil? Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſins? It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not conſumed, becauſe his compaſſions fail not," Lam. iii. 22, 38, 39.

Upon this picture let me intreat you to fix your ſerious attention. Stop for a moment, and charge your mind to view and review it; and then examine your own features; ſee whether you can trace any reſemblance between yourſelf and it. The lines of life in every pious character are alike. God help you never to reſt ſatisfied till the character be your own.

But

But remember, it is no argument in proof of your being a real penitent, that you have felt ſome occaſional remorſe for your ſins under particular circumſtances, ſuch as temporal misfortunes, bodily afflictions, or in the proſpect of death. Ahab himſelf, the unhappy wretch who ſold himſelf to work wickedneſs, felt this. Pharaoh himſelf, that impious infidel, who dared to rebel againſt the command of heaven's Sovereign, when the plagues of the Lord were upon him, felt this. Judas himſelf, who, worſe than Eſau, could ſell the very Saviour of ſinners, and betray the innocent blood, for a piece of ſilver, felt this—even *he* repented, not for his *ſin*, but for *himſelf*. The Lord help you clearly to diſtinguiſh between theſe two things, which differ as widely as grace and nature, light and darkneſs, heaven and hell*.

Nor

* There is a natural ſorrow proceeding from the impreſſion of afflicting evils. Senſe is very tender and apt to reſent what is oppreſſive to it. A ſinner that has waſted his eſtate, blaſted his reputation, ſhortened his life by his exceſſes,

Nor is it any conclusive evidence of your being altogether a christian, that you have outwardly reformed and forsaken some of your old sins; we read of those who had escaped the † pollutions of the world, but whose latter end was worse than their beginning. And what was the reason of this? if they had been real christians, they would

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cesses, and hastened his damnation, may feel anguish in his breast for his sins, the procuring causes of his punishment. But this sorrow proceeds only from the sense of external evils, not from the melted heart for the intrinsic evil of sin: as marble pillars are wet, from the moisture of the ambient air. It is the miserable *Man*, not the miserable *Sinner* that mourns. This sorrow is consistent with the love of sin; and when the penal evil is removed, the sinner returns to the practice of it. Carnal sorrow only respects a man's self, as a sufferer: it is in hell, in the extreme degrees, *there is weeping for ever*. Bates.

† The Greek word μιασματα, translated here Pollutions, denotes the grossest excesses and most scandalous iniquities: which were all that those people forsook, who returned to their vomit again: their lusts being only restrained, not subdued by the power of divine and efficacious grace. Their nature was not changed, only their manners; their external appearance was altered for the better, but it was only like that of the sow that is washed, which will naturally return to her wallowing in the mire.

no doubt have continued so; but their hearts were not upright before God; they were never renewed in the spirit of their minds, though reformed in the conduct of their lives; they had never repented with that repentance which is unto salvation.

For that is true repentance, where our sorrow is principally on account of sin, and where our hatred is turned against it; against its *nature* and *being*, as well as its *punishment* and *misery*. Then do we repent, when we justify God and condemn ourselves. Such a disposition is in the very face of it gracious; its spirituality is self-evident; and it proves itself, without any additional evidence, to be of divine origin. It can only descend from above, and come down from the God of all grace, the Father of all mercies, the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

Without this, though we should fast ourselves to skeletons; though we should read over ten thousand prayer-books; though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, and clothe the naked; we might, we shall eternally perish. The Lord enable us, then,

then, to apply most earnestly to Him, whom God hath exalted with his own right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Acts v. 31.

Obs. 2. Repentance is not the work of a day; nor does the religion of a true believer consist in a few rapturous and transitory fits of devotion: but repentance is the business of every day, because in many things we offend all. Who can tell how oft he offendeth! What with the sinful thoughts that run through our minds; the idle words that slip over our tongues; the precious moments that pass by us mispent or unimproved; what abundant reason have the holiest saints to walk humbly with their God! humbly, not despairingly: for "repentance is a tear dropt from the eye of faith," as one finely observed. While we are looking upon him, whom by our sins we have pierced, let us mourn: mourn over this body of sin and death which follows us whithersoever we go. And let us never forget, that our very "repentance

needs

needs repenting of, and that our tears want washing in the blood of Jesus ‡." Let us be longing and looking with eager expectation, for that happy period,

When this vile and sinful nature
Incorruption shall put on—

when mortality shall be swallowed up of life—when death shall be swallowed up in victory—and when this body of our vileness shall be fashioned like unto his body of glory, who by his mighty power is able to subdue all things unto himself. Unto Him, with the Father, and the holy Spirit, be equal and everlasting praise. Amen.

PRAYER.

"Great and glorious Lord God, the "high and lofty One, before whose ma-"jesty and perfection archangels veil their "faces with their wings, and fall prostrate

‡ Bishop Beveridge.

"with

"with the deepeſt ſelf-abaſement; how "ſhall ſinful duſt and aſhes approach thy "preſence, ſo as to find acceptance! How "ſhall we, who have dared to take up arms "againſt the Lord of heaven and earth, "preſume to come before thee! Many, O "God, are thy wonderful works: nor is it "among the leaſt of them that we are on "this ſide a miſerable eternity, and that "we are not ſuffering that righteous ven-"geance, which for our ſins we have ſo "abundantly deſerved. For againſt thee, "thee only have we been doing evil in thy "ſight times without number: we have "been affronting thee to thy face: we "have been treating thee with the greateſt "contempt: we have been ſinning againſt "thee, and treading thy commandments "under our feet, and ſaying, Tuſh, the "Lord doth not ſee it, neither doth the "Almighty regard it. But are not thine "eyes upon all our ways? thou art about "our bed and about our paths; thou "knoweſt the very ſecrets of our hearts; "thou underſtandeſt all our thoughts afar "off. O let it be thy bleſſed will to im-

"press this awful and affecting truth upon
"all our souls: that our eyes may be en-
"lightened to see *Thee* in the glory of thine
"omnipresence, and our *sins* as so many
"heinous and abominable offences com-
"mitted against thy divine majesty; and
"therefore deserving of thy wrath and eter-
"nal damnation.

"And as thou hast been pleased to re-
"veal thy holy mind and will to us in thy
"blessed word, open our eyes, O Lord,
"that we may behold the wondrous things
"of the law. Shine into our dark and
"benighted souls, to give us the light of
"the knowlege of thy glory in the face of
"Jesus Christ. Subdue every high thought,
"and proud imagination, that would exalt
"itself against the knowlege of Christ.
"Teach our best reason, reason. Let not
"the vain conceit of our hearts, be suf-
"fered to hide from our view the glory of
"the gospel of the blessed God. Let not
"the mysteriousness of any doctrine induce
"us to reject it: nor the difficulty of any
"precept, to deny it: nor the seeming se-
"verity of any punishment, to suspect the

"truth

"truth of it: nor the greatness of any "promise, which thou hast delivered in thy "unerring word, to disbelieve it. May "we ever think it the highest act of right "reason, to submit our judgment to God's, "and our will to the divine: and the "greatest mark of ignorance and folly to "deny what we cannot comprehend, or to "suppose that poor short-sighted creatures "like us, can be any competent judges of "the conduct of the *most High*. O that "with the deepest humility of soul we may "all be brought to say, Let God be true, "but every man a liar: that thou mightest "be justified when thou speakest, and be "clear when thou judgest.

"Under an affecting sense of the innu-"merable sins we have committed against "thee, may all our murmurings be silenced: "in all the afflictions with which it shall "please thee to visit us, may we possess our "souls in patience, and kiss thy chastening "rod: may we accept the punishment of "our iniquity, and never forget, that thou "always punishest us less than our offences "deserve; and that it is of the Lord's mer-

"preſs this awful and affecting truth upon "all our ſouls: that our eyes may be en- "lightened to ſee *Thee* in the glory of thine "omnipreſence, and our *ſins* as ſo many "heinous and abominable offences com- "mitted againſt thy divine majeſty; and "therefore deſerving of thy wrath and eter- "nal damnation.

"And as thou haſt been pleaſed to re- "veal thy holy mind and will to us in thy "bleſſed word, open our eyes, O Lord, "that we may behold the wondrous things "of the law. Shine into our dark and "benighted ſouls, to give us the light of "the knowlege of thy glory in the face of "Jeſus Chriſt. Subdue every high thought, "and proud imagination, that would exalt "itſelf againſt the knowlege of Chriſt. "Teach our beſt reaſon, reaſon. Let not "the vain conceit of our hearts, be ſuf- "fered to hide from our view the glory of "the goſpel of the bleſſed God. Let not "the myſterioufneſs of any doctrine induce "us to reject it: nor the difficulty of any "precept, to deny it: nor the ſeeming ſe- "verity of any puniſhment, to ſuſpect the

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" always punishest us less than our offences
" deserve; and that it is of the Lord's mer-

"cies we are not consumed, because his "compassions fail not. Suffer us not to "lose sight of thee in dwelling upon second "causes; but keep us continually mindful, "that it is thy never-failing providence "which ordereth all things in heaven and "in earth. In all our ways may we ac-"knowlege thee: and though no affliction "be for the present joyous but grievous, "may we be enabled to believe, that all "things shall work together for good; to "the advancement of thy glory, and to the "present and eternal salvation of our souls. "We beg it for the name's sake of a dear "Redeemer, to whom, with thyself, O mer-"ciful God, and the eternal Spirit, be all "honor and praise for ever and ever." Amen.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

PSALM li. 4.

AGAINST THEE, THEE ONLY HAVE I SINNED, AND DONE THIS EVIL IN THY SIGHT: THAT THOU MIGHTEST BE JUSTIFIED WHEN THOU SPEAKEST, AND BE CLEAR WHEN THOU JUDGEST.

THE Spirit of divine truth, is directly repugnant to the ſpirit of every man by nature. The only and the certain cauſe of this, is nothing elſe but that man is totally fallen, totally corrupt. Sin has impaired his intellectual faculties, as well as defiled his animal affections. And therefore the carnal mind, the wiſdom of the creature as unrenewed, and his taſte, are

enmity against God. He may have an understanding of, a penetration into, and a taste for the beauties of art and nature; but as to the things of God, there is none that understandeth their beauty, fitness, or propriety, till divinely enlightened. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them," there is a moral impossibility in the way, "because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14.

By the natural man in this place, we are to understand, says the learned Mr. Poole in his annotations, 'such to whom God has not by his Spirit revealed the things of God; by which alone men can come to know the things that are freely given to them of God. All these, though some of them are much superior to others, having their minds cultivated and adorned with worldly knowlege and wisdom, yet do not in their hearts embrace and approve such doctrines as are purely matters of faith, standing upon a divine revelation. For men of wit and reason count them all

foolishness,

foolishness, being neither demonstrable by sense or natural reason.'

Upon this account it may be that the original Greek word, frequently translated Repentance, signifies *a change of Mind*; or that the person, who is made a partaker of this grace, has a different conception of divine and spiritual things, and feels himself very differently affected towards them from what he was wont to do. A new scene of things, as to religious concerns, is presented to his view; and accordingly, he has a new set of internal sensations. Or, to speak more plainly, the true penitent is a new creature in a new world. For it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, until God hath revealed them by his Spirit," 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

In order to the enjoyment of these things, the gracious soul is led to see natural and spiritual objects in their true light: the creature in its vanity; the world in its

emptineſs; and ſin in its guilt, as well as its miſery; and, which is a ſort of thing to which every unregenerate perſon is an intire ſtranger, to diſcern the evil of it conſidered as an offence againſt God.

This poſition hath been already diſcuſſed; but on account of its vaſt importance, and the fundamental part it bears in the nature of evangelical Repentance, you will allow me again to proſecute ſo intereſting a ſubject; which I ſhall do by conſidering, how or in what light we are to underſtand ſin to be an offence againſt God. We may then proceed to ſhew from the words of the text, that every penitent heart is bound to acknowlege the juſtice of God in the damnation of ſinners. After which, I ſhall hope for your continued attention, while I am attempting to demonſtrate, that every renewed mind will not only acknowlege, but approve, the vindictive juſtice of God as an amiable attribute. And in the diſcuſſion of each of theſe things, God help me to ſpeak the words of truth and ſoberneſs; and may the word come to you with power,

and

and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance †, 1 Thess. i. 5.

I. In the first place, then, we are to shew, how we ought to look upon sin as committed against God.

If the sin, of which we have at any time been guilty, be primarily committed against our fellow-creature, so as to injure his person, property, or peace, it is an insult against God by an abuse of his creatures; and therefore, though in its immediate tendency it only affects the comfort of a poor frail mortal like ourselves, yet it is to be considered in its ultimate issue, as an offence to God. That this is the language of scripture, needs no other confirmation than that of a single reference to a passage in Lev. vi. 1.—which gives us an account of the trespass-offering for sins done wittingly. "And the Lord spake unto Moses,

† Πληροφορια significat summam certitudinem mentis, tamque certam persuasionem argumentis, ac rebus ipsis comprobatam, ut dubitare amplius non possit.

Leigh Crit. Sacr.

saying,

ſaying, If a ſoul ſin, and commit a treſpaſs *againſt the Lord*—how? by lying unto his *neighbour* in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowſhip, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour; or have found that which was loſt, and lieth concerning it, and ſweareth falſly; in any of all theſe that a man doeth, ſinning therein; then it ſhall be, becauſe he hath ſinned, and is guilty, that he ſhall not only make reſtitution to the party immediately affected by it, but he ſhall bring his treſpaſs-offering *unto the Lord*." The morality of which muſt be, by way of owning that his offence was committed againſt God, as well as againſt his neighbour.

A deep and practical conviction of this, compelled David upon the preſent occaſion to addreſs God in the ſtile of the text, "Againſt thee, thee only have I ſinned, and done this evil in thy ſight."

Beſides, we are to recollect, that there is no ſin which we can commit, but what is expreſly forbidden in the firſt or ſecond table of the ten commands. "Whoſoever there-

ſore ſinneth, tranſgreſſeth alſo the law; for ſin is the tranſgreſſion of the law, 1 John iii. 4. The law is a tranſcript of the divine image; is a revelation of the mind and will of God; prohibiting that from which it is his ſovereign pleaſure we ſhould abſtain, and enjoining that, which he would have us religiouſly perform. We cannot therefore either do what it forbids, or omit what it commands, without practically deſpiſing the author and giver of it. To do either of theſe things is *actually* ſaying unto God, though it may not be in ſo many words, "Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowlege of thy ways. We will not have thee to reign over us. We chuſe to be independent of God. Our own will, and not his law, ſhall be the rule of our conduct."

If it be for the ſake of the creature that we commit the offence, then it is worſhiping and ſerving the creature more than the Creator—if, for the ſake of what we call earthly pleaſure, we gratify the luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the eye, or the pride of life; then it is being lovers of plea-

ſure

ſure more than lovers of God——if it be to indulge our own ſelf-love and ſelf-will, it is an inſolent effort to invert the order of the two tables; it is to cenſure infinite wiſdom; it is to correct the unerring judgment of God, and to ſay, that we ought to love ourſelves with all our hearts, and that the great God ſhould have the ſecond place only in our affection and reſpect. Thus, which ever way we take a view of ſin; whether as committed againſt our neighbour or ourſelves; from what motive, or to what end ſoever; it muſt be confeſſed, that in all its forms, and under all its diſguiſes, it is pouring contempt upon the moſt high God.

It is a denial of the *ſovereignty* of God, by diſallowing his authority over us, and the lawfulneſs of his having any juſt right to the title of, KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS.

It is a reflection upon his *wiſdom*, as ſuppoſing he doth not know how to chuſe for us, and that he is not a compleat judge of what it is proper for us to do, or to leave undone.

It

It is an offence to his *omniſcience* and *omnipreſence*. For if a creature be in ſuch a ſtate as to entirely diſregard or deny theſe attributes of the divine nature, how apoſtatiſed muſt his heart be from God! And ſuch an apoſtate heart had our firſt parent the very moment after he had taken of the forbidden tree. But to ſhew us the evil of it, it is written, "the wicked ſhall be turned into hell, and all the people that *forget* God." And if the offender be mindful of theſe perfections of the Deity while he is ſinning againſt him, what is this, but to fly in the very face of God, if I may ſo ſpeak, to commit treaſon in the preſence of the Sovereign, and to bid heaven itſelf defiance? We have a beautiful obſervation upon this ſubject in the writings attributed to the ſon of Sirach, chap. xxiii. 18, 19. "A man that breaketh wedlock, ſaying thus in his heart, Who ſeeth me? I am compaſſed about with darkneſs, the walls cover me, and no body ſeeth me; what need I to fear? the moſt High will not remember my ſins:" ſuch a man only feareth the eyes of men, and knoweth not that the

the eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, beholding all the ways of men, and considering the most secret parts. And, no doubt, when David came to himself, after his grievous fall, when he returned to the right exercise of his mind, every word in the 139th psalm affected his heart with peculiar force, and with the most pungent sorrow.

Again, how is the *holiness* of God offended by sin! Nothing can be more opposite to his nature as a holy God, than this is. He is of too pure eyes to behold the least iniquity. And sin is that evil thing which his soul hateth.

What an offence is it to the *greatness* and *majesty* of that God with whom we have to do! "Thus saith the high and holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; will ye not fear me, saith the Lord? will ye not tremble at my presence? Look into hell, and behold the power of my arm. Look up to heaven, and behold the glory of my person. Shall devils tremble at my name, and angels fall abashed before my

throne,

throne, and will ye not be afraid, O sons of earth, to offend so great a God?"—We will not fear thee, is the language of every sin.

But how vile, how aggravated, and, to say all in one comprehensive word, how *sinful* does sin appear, when considered as an offence against the *goodness* of God. This is a circumstance which the Lord never fails to mention in his indictments against his rebellious creatures. How did it increase the baseness of David's crime, that the Lord had anointed him king over Israel; and had given him the house of Israel, and the house of Judah; and delivered him out of the hand of Saul; and that after all this he should despise the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight! And how does that charge which the Lord brings against his professing people in Isa. i. fill us with horror at the person against whom it is brought! "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah,

sinful

ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, they have forſaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy one of Iſrael to anger, they have gone away backward." —How does it engage every grateful heart on the Lord's ſide to hear him thus addreſſing himſelf, in the words of the prophet, to thoſe who had ſinned againſt his *goodneſs*, and returned ingratitude for love! "Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controverſy, and ye ſtrong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controverſy with his people, and he will plead with Iſrael. O my people, what have I done unto thee, wherein have I wearied thee? teſtify againſt me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the houſe of ſervants, and I ſent before thee Moſes and Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab conſulted, and what Balaam the ſon of Beor anſwered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteouſneſs of the Lord: how great his mercy has been; how aggravated your offences are; and how

just God might be in punishing you for them. Mic. vi. 2, 6. Thus sin appears to be an offence to every thing in the divine nature, that God hath been pleased to reveal to us concerning himself and his adorable perfections.

II. Pass we on therefore to the second Point of consideration, which seems immediately to arise out of that we have just dismissed; and that is, to shew that every person who sees sin in its proper colors, and not through a false medium, will be brought to own the justice of God in the damnation of sinners.

Human nature is apt to start back at such a proposition as this; but this is no sign of its wisdom, or its virtue. Truth is truth, however displeasing it may be to a corrupt and degenerate mind. And I believe I may venture to say, that an abiding and heart-felt conviction of the truth I have just now recited, is a fundamental part of Christian knowlege, and one of the necessary effects of divine illumination. Without which, I cannot see how any man can have a true sense of the free, unmerited, and sovereign

grace of God in the redemption of his soul, or a right view of the justice of God in the sufferings and death of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Neither am I at all surprized that profane sinners ridicule the one, or that daring infidels deny the other.

But, however the immoral may blaspheme, the self-righteous wonder at, or the unbelieving reject this truth,

Engrav'd as in eternal brass
The humbling doctrine stands.—

And is demonstrable from the sinfulness of sin, whether we consider it in its nature and quality, or in its tendency, or in its quantity.

As to its nature as committed against the person of the infinite and eternal God; and as being an offence to all his divine attributes, a contempt of all his glorious perfections, and an impious opposition to his holy law and righteous will—who, that is not biassed by the most selfish and wicked partiality, will dispute for a moment, whether a sinner does not deserve to be punished

with

with everlasting destruction from the presence of that God, whom he hath thus despised; and from the glory of his power, whom he hath thus provoked?—

With regard to its tendency—do we not see and know from incontestable facts; from daily, innumerable instances; from the most painful and bitter experience; that the direct tendency of sin is to introduce disorder, confusion, misery, and every evil work into the world? What is pride? what is envy? what is lust? what is covetousness? what is self-love? what is self-will? what are all these things but so many different expressions for the contents of Ezekiel's roll, which was written within and without, with *lamentation*, and *mourning* and *woe*? From whence come wars and fightings amongst us? from whence sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion? from whence all those domestic sorrows which disquiet the peace of families, disunite the tenderest ties, and embitter the dearest friendships? from whence all those personal distresses which oblige every individual to adopt the pathetic strain of the old patriarch, with

application to himself, and say, "Few and *evil* have the days of my pilgrimage been!"—Say, whence flow these bitter streams, but from that corrupt fountain, SIN? Sin, whose aim is not only to make human life worse than non-existence, but whose design is, if it could be pursued to the uttermost, to destroy the great Author of all being himself. The man who doth not see this, is but a mere novice in the science of religion. "The carnal mind, says the apostle, is *enmity against God*." The nature of enmity is either to avoid, or, if it cannot avoid, to destroy the object of hatred. But the sinner cannot flee from the presence of God, of necessity therefore he has that in him, which in its tendency aims at the destruction of the great God; but which is restrained by an intuitive conviction of the impossibility of the thing. And there is no sort of doubt but the infernal spirits, who are tormented in the presence of God, wish it were in their power to cast him for ever out of their sight. Such, so shocking and evil is the tendency of sin! and, if so, who will deny that the damnation of sinners is just?

If

If we consider sin in its quantity—who can count the number of sins he has committed? who can tell how oft he offendeth? or rather let me say, who can fix the moment in which he does not offend, when he is carrying about with him every where, and into every thing he thinks, or says, or does, a body of sin and death!—

But lest this sort of reasoning should not be admitted, however self-evident and conclusive it may be to a mind that is not deluded by prejudices, self-love, and corruption; let us have recourse to the method made use of by the finest, and the most convincing writer upon this great subject; I mean that of personal appeal to every man's own conscience.

Let me then address you in your true character, as being what you really are, sinners against the God that made you; and let me ask you, If the great God should treat you as you have treated him, would he not be *just* in so doing? but how does every man by nature treat God? If there

* See the Reverend Mr. Edwards's sermon on the justice of God in the damnation of sinners.

be any truth in the word of God, he has no love to him, as being what he is, in his real nature and glory. If he profess to have any love to God, it is to a god formed in his own imagination, and not to such an one as the scriptures reveal. If he seem to be possessed of it, it arises from some corrupt motives or sinful ends; which, if traced up to their true original, would be found to terminate in self-love. For it is an indelible truth, that the carnal mind, or the mind of every natural man, is enmity against God; however glossed over, and whatever specious appearances it may make. A tyger is a tyger, though it may be tamed by human art; and poison is poison, though wrapped up in gold. Now if the sinner, as such, has no love to *God* in his heart, who is so infinitely deserving of all the love a creature can possibly render him, reason itself must force us to confess it would be just in God, were he never to manifest the least degree of love to *him*.

Man, by nature, through the powerful influence of sin, has no regard at all for the *glory* of God; no generous, no becoming

ing concern for his *honor* upon earth. In the ſocial connections of life, common generoſity will teach a man to reſent an injury done to the friend of his boſom, or an indignity offered to a liberal benefactor. But is this our conduct with regard to our beſt Friend, our greateſt Benefactor; the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being; and to whom we are indebted for every mercy we either do, or hope to enjoy? Where is our zeal for his honor, our concern for his glory? Can we not hear his bleſſed name abuſed, ſlandered, blaſphemed, and his truths reviled, without the leaſt degree of generous reſentment? Is this thy kindneſs to thy Friend? this the beſt return you can make him; to be utterly regardleſs of and unconcerned about his honor? And wilt thou, after all this, deny that he would be juſt, if he were never to do any thing to promote your happineſs; if he were to leave you to be miſerable for ever?

The natural diſpoſition of every human unregenerate heart, is to make light of God; to act as if they did not think him worth their notice, or at leaſt, that what

he has to ſay is the laſt thing to which they ought to attend. Hence it is that they delay that repentance which they ignorantly imagine to be in their own power; and defer their attention to God and eternal concerns, as if God were ſo inſignificant a Being, and his favors were ſo trifling a matter, that a few moments at the eve of life, were quite ſufficient to ſhew their regard to the one or the other. Hence their neglect of the ſalvation purchaſed at ſo great a price, and at the expence of the blood of the Son of God. When ſinners are invited to contemplate it, to embrace it, and to adore the infinite mercy of God that provided it, they begin with one conſent to make excuſe, and prefer their pleaſures, their profits, and all their vain purſuits, to the favor of God, and to an intereſt in the redemption of the Lord and Saviour. How juſt therefore would it be in God, if he were to ſwear in his wrath, that ſuch ſinners never ſhould ſhare in the bleſſings of his pardoning love!

Eſpecially when we conſider, that in this reſpect, all the boaſted dignity of man degenerates beneath the brute creation itſelf.

The

The very beasts of the field may teach us the lesson of gratitude: the dull ox knoweth and acknowlegeth its owner, and the stupid ass his master's crib; while fallen man, who values himself upon being a *rational* creature, is unmindful of the daily, repeated, and numberless favors he receives from Him, who filleth all things living with plenteousness. 'And now, thou *ungrateful Brute*, to adopt the stile of the ingenious Dr. South, thou blemish to mankind, and reproach to thy creation—what shall we say of thee? for thou art an exception from all the visible world—neither the heavens above, nor the earth beneath, afford any thing like thee—and therefore, if thou wouldst find thy parallel, go to hell, which is both the region, and the emblem of ingratitude: for besides thyself, there is nothing but hell that is always receiving and never restoring.' And however the justice of the thing be denied by the stout-hearted, who are far from righteousness, the truth is certain, both with respect to the moral and natural world, "That the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon

it,

it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 7, 8. The very heathens themselves, by the dim light of nature, saw so much evil in the sin of ingratitude, to which human kind are so much addicted toward the great God, that they were accustomed to make use of this proverb, *Ingratum si dixeris, omnia dixeris* — call a man ungrateful, and in that term you sum up every thing that is vile.

But as if this were not sufficient, and as if your *reasonable Beings* were determined to be as opposite to reason and religion as possible, where is there one among them, unless his heart has been changed by the power of divine grace, who does not set himself to *oppose* God in his true character? They may profess a regard for a God which they have formed in their imagination, and may fall down and worship the idol that exists no where but in their own brain—but let the true God be pointed out to them,

and

and exhibited before them in all the glory of his incomprehenſible nature, unſpotted holineſs, and inflexible juſtice—let them be told, from the authority of his bleſſed word, that he hath denounced everlaſting miſery againſt *every* ſoul that doeth *any* evil—that whoſo offendeth in *one point*, is guilty of all—and that they are *curſed*, according to their deſert, who *continue* not in *all* things that are written in the book of the law to *do* them—let them be informed, that the attributes and perfections of the Godhead are bound to execute this curſe upon all who do not flee to Chriſt as the only refuge ſet before them; and that there is no poſſibility of eſcaping the wrath to come, but through believing in him—let them be aſſured, that there is no admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven, but for ſuch as are born again of the Spirit—let them be told, that God's *nature* and *word* require theſe things, and if they are not really converted in heart to God, they will immediately diſcover their contempt of the true God, and of his bleſſed word. Like the apoſtle Paul, before he knew the grace of God in

truth,

truth, they will be exceedingly mad against him and it.

Now, seeing these things are so, and cannot be spoken against, without speaking against revelation, fact, and experience; would it not be *just* in God to treat his creatures in the same manner as they have thought proper to treat their Creator? and if he should do so, what must be the inevitable consequence? He must shew no love to them—no regard to their eternal felicity—he must make light of them, intirely neglect them, and leave them to shift for themselves—or, which is worse, he must punish them with everlasting destruction from his presence—he must for ever set himself against them—the necessary effect of which must be, that as he is the author and source of all happiness, they must be miserable to all eternity.

Whether the great God will chuse to act in this manner towards all his creatures who *deserve* this treatment, is another question: but that his conduct would be altogether *just*, were he to do so, is incontestable from the forecited arguments, deduced

duced from the united forces both of ſcripture and reaſon. Neither is the doctrine it contains to be conſidered as circumſtantial, or merely ſpeculative. It is of the utmoſt conſequence to the intereſts of divine truth, and of practical religion. To deny it, has a direct tendency to lead us to think God ſuch an one as ourſelves, fickle, uncertain, and changeable; who is ſo weak as to be influenced by *pure mercy*, and that ſomething or nothing; that nobody knows what, called *benevolence*, without any regard to his holineſs, juſtice, or truth *. An heinous offence which the great God charges upon ſome profane infidels of old, who hated inſtruction, and caſt his words behind them. —"Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilence; thou thoughteſt that I was al-

* 'Tis thus our infidels th' Eternal draw.
They ſet at odds heaven's jarring attributes;
And, with one excellence, another wound;
Maim heaven's perfection, break its equal beams,
Bid *Mercy* triumph over—God himſelf,
Undeify'd by their opprobrious praiſe:
A God *all Mercy*, is a God *unjuſt*.

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together

together such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver," Psalm l. 21, 22.

To deny this fundamental article of divine revelation, is to lessen that infinite display of the mercy of God manifested to sinners in the unspeakable gift of his dear Son; by intimating, that it would not have been *just* in him had he left them to perish for ever, as the due reward of their sins; or, that his justice obliged him to act as he did. A thought this, which invalidates the force of all those scriptures which speak of the amazing love of God, and of Christ, as being inconceivable in its height, unfathomable in its depth, inexpressible in its length, and incomprehensible in its breadth; yea, as surpassing all knowlege, Eph. iii. 18, 19. But where was the wonderful mercy and grace of God in doing what he did, or of Christ in suffering and performing what he did, if a different conduct in them both would have been *unjust?* or, if it would have been *unjust* in God to have condemned

a guilty

a guilty world to the bitter pains of eternal death?

So that to deny the justice of God in the damnation of sinners, is in effect to deny his mercy and grace in their salvation. And this is the true cause why many Arminians reject that sovereignty of God, and the doctrine of election, from ignorance, which Pelagians, Pharisees, and Moralists oppose, from the corrupt principles of pride and self-righteousness. It is therefore for the glory of God's grace, of the salvation of Christ, and of the truth of the Bible, that every real christian should be brought to acknowlege that God might be just in saying to him, if he treat him as his iniquities deserve, "Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire."

III. Nor is this all.—I have ventured to hint, what I hope in the third place to prove, that the right view of things is, to *approve* of the conduct of God with respect to the doctrine considered under the second head of discourse.

This indeed might appear ſelf-evident in the very face of it, were it not for the ſinful blindneſs of the unenlightened mind. This truth hangs in an immediate chain of dependence upon that we have juſt diſmiſſed. A condemned malefactor may hear without diſappointment, the upright judge pronouncing him guilty, and paſſing the ſentence of death upon him—his conſcience may force him to acknowlege the juſtice—but his heart frets with reſentment againſt the judge who pronounces the ſentence; and he moſt ſincerely wiſhes there had been no law to oblige him to paſs it. He hates the law and the judge too. Will any one ſay, this is a right view of things? Is ſuch a man a worthy member of ſociety? or can even benevolence itſelf wiſh his life to be ſpared, or his ſentence to be repealed? In civil juſtice ſuch a thought would be attributed either to the greateſt degree of weakneſs, wickedneſs, or ignorance §. Nor can we ſuppoſe, that in the proceſs of the divine

§ Fiat juſtitia, ruat cœlum. Even an heathen could ſay, 'Let juſtice be done, though heaven itſelf ſhould fall.'

juſtice,

juſtice, that God, who muſt and will do right to his own honor, perfections, and government, will ever ſhew favor to one whom his law brings in guilty of high treaſon againſt the crown and dignity of heaven, and who does not *approve* the juſtice of that puniſhment which his offence has incurred. This would be to pardon a traitor *in* rebelling, as well as after his rebellion; to ſave a ſinner *in* his ſins, and not *from* them; to ſhew mercy to one, who, if he were not bound hand and foot, would refuſe the offer of pardon; to hold out the ſceptre of grace to one, whoſe will is diſpoſed to ſtrike his ſovereign in the face with it. And therefore, the way in which the great God reinſtates a rebel into his favor, is by bringing him to a ſight of the vileneſs of his rebellion, and to confeſs how juſt, how fit, how *right* and *becoming* a thing it is in God, to arm his juſtice with vengeance againſt him on account of it.

This, indeed, is neceſſarily implied in a ſinner's crying for *Mercy*. What is this, but to own he deſerves no favor at all from God, and that he has forfeited all right and

title in himſelf to every bleſſing he can beſtow upon him? What is this, but to acknowlege his guilt and demerit? The man that accuſes himſelf, juſtifies God. He who lothes himſelf for his ſinfulneſs, muſt admire God for his holineſs. He who condemns himſelf for his offences, which is an eſſential part of true repentance, muſt approve of God in his juſtice; or elſe there is no ſincerity in his ſelf-accuſation, ſelf-lothing, and ſelf-condemnation. Such an one, therefore, can be no better than an arrant hypocrite. For if God be not worthy to be admired and loved for his juſtice, he is not worthy to be admired or loved for his mercy; and a rational being muſt be brought to *approve* him in the former, before he can in his judgment, and with his heart, ſue for an intereſt in the latter, from a *right* view of his need of it.

Every real penitent therefore, being *renewed* in the *ſpirit* of his *mind*, and reſtored in part to the moral image or likeneſs of God; and being made partaker of a divine nature; has his underſtanding enlightened to view things in the ſame light (as to kind, though

though not as to degree) as God himſelf views them: he thinks, in general, as God thinks of them; he wills in a meaſure as God wills; and loves, in Intention and deſign, as God loves. Does the great God *approve*, as well as declare, his own juſtice in the condemnation of ſinners, as ſuch? So does he. Otherwiſe, what is the difference between a fallen ſpirit in hell, and a regenerated, ſpiritual man, upon earth? The very devils muſt ſee and acknowlege the juſtice of God in their being bound down in everlaſting chains of darkneſs; but ſtill, they equally hate God, his juſtice, and their chains: but the real chriſtian admires and *approves* the nature, conduct, and glory of God in all.

If this be not the caſe, how is he ſaid to give thanks at the remembrance of the holineſs of the Godhead? Pſalm xcvii. 12. Holineſs is that attribute which determines him to hate ſin with an infinite hatred. But how can a ſinner praiſe and adore God for that which is the glory of his nature, the admiration of angels, and the happineſs of heaven itſelf, without *approving* it

as manifesting itself in the condemnation of sinners?

We have a beautiful illustration of this temper, as to the nature of it, in what the great apostle of the Gentiles hath recorded for our example in Rom. vii. Where, to use his own language, he tells us, "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." That is, says the learned Mr. Poole in his annotations, 'Before I knew the law aright, and understood the divine and spiritual meaning of it, I was alive in my own conceit. I thought myself in as good a condition as any man living. My conscience never gave me any trouble. So it was with me once, or heretofore, when I was a pharisee, or in an unregenerate state. But when I came to know and understand the spiritual meaning and extent of it, that it condemns sinful lusts, affections, and inclinations, the sinfulness and guilt of sin appeared; and I had a lively sense thereof imprinted upon my soul. I felt my conscience deadly wounded. I was convinced I was in a state of death and damnation.

I lost

I loſt the confidence I formerly had in my good eſtate.'

All theſe convictions concerning the apoſtle's perſon and condition, aroſe from the view he had of the purity, ſpirituality, and extent of the holy law of God; which brought him in guilty, and pronounced the ſentence of eternal death upon him. And yet, ſo far was he from diſguſting the law upon this account, that he gives his approving teſtimonial to it with his own ſign manual, by ſaying, "The law is holy, and juſt, and good," Rom. vii. 12.

Nor is leſs than this required from every renewed and penitent heart. It was not an attainment peculiar to Paul as an apoſtle, but as a ſpiritual man. When Chriſt ſays, "heaven and earth ſhall paſs away, ere one jot or tittle of the law ſhall fail;" every chriſtian will aſſent and conſent therewith. If the word of God ſay, "Curſed is every one that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them; all the people of God will ſay, Amen," Deut. xxvii. 26.

And to ſhew us how holy and becoming this diſpoſition of heart is, when the method

of the divine proceeding at the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, and perdition of ungodly men, is set before us, the celestial hosts are represented as rejoicing in this transaction, and saying, "Hallelujah; salvation and glory, and honor and power, unto the Lord our God: for *true* and *righteous* are his judgments," Rev. xix. 1, 2 †.

Upon the strength of all these considerations I leave it with yourselves to determine, whether or no it be a constituent part of the christian character to approve the justice of God in the damnation of sinners. In the mean time, permit me to finish the subject with a few inferences resulting from what hath been said.

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† This scripture proves them to be *pleased* with the *righteousness* of the sentence, and that when Christ shall say to the goats on his left hand, DEPART, YE CURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, the saints also shall shake their hands at them, and echo it after them, Depart, ye cursed; and subscribe that he is *just* and *righteous* in damning all the unbelievers, though many of them may be their own parents, or children, or friends, or nearest and dearest relations. They shall not grieve at their destruction, because God is glorified thereby.

Bishop HOPKINS.

INFER.

INFER. 1. If every ſin we commit is to be conſidered as an offence, either immediately or ultimately againſt God, we may learn from hence, by what ſtandard the nature, guilt, and evil of ſin, are to be determined. Not by the opinion of men, who are ſcarce able to judge aright of any thing that is before them: nor by the opinion of the world, who look on things according to the outward appearance, and who never give righteous judgment concerning ſpiritual matters: nor by the cuſtom of the time and place in which we live, becauſe then, truth and falſhood, right and wrong, muſt change with the age and climate: but by the infallible criterion of God's bleſſed word, the balance of the ſanctuary; by which we are taught, that all ſin, every deſect of perfect conformity to the divine law, whether of the firſt or ſecond table, is an offence againſt God; a contempt of his authority; and a diſhonor to his glorious attributes and perfections. Hence the infinite evil and demerit of ſin, with reſpect to its quality. And hence, the eternal duration of that puniſhment denounced againſt it:

the juſtice of which every real chriſtian is bound to acknowlege and to approve—the certainty of which every infidel will one day be forced to own—and the miſery of which every impenitent and profane ſinner has the greateſt reaſon to fear.

Have you now, my fellow-ſinners, ever been led to view your own particular ſins in this light? Have you ever been taught to look upon all the lying, deceit, treachery, cruelty, inſincerity, and ſlander, of which you have been guilty ever ſince you have been born; with your innumerable breaches of the firſt table of the divine law, as ſo many heinous offences againſt the moſt High God? And have you been enlightened to ſee the juſtice of God in denouncing eternal wrath againſt you for them? And has a conviction of the juſtice of God in your condemnation, driven you, from periſhing neceſſity, to take refuge in the arms of his mercy, held out to you in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt?—If thou haſt felt none of theſe things, beware, leſt death ſurprize thee, and judgment overtake thee, in this ſtate of ignorance and deſtruction; for then

then a great ranſom cannot deliver thee. As the tree falls, ſo it muſt lie for ever.

INFER. 2. If it be true that the real chriſtian is favored with ſuch ſpiritual views of the juſtice of God in his dealings with ſinful men, it is the duty of every ſerious mind to be aſpiring after them. "Not as though we had already attained, either were already perfect."

It is both the misfortune and fault of many who profeſs a ſincere regard to divine truth, to imagine that nothing is ſcriptural that they have not experienced. A ſpirit of prejudice, or of ſelf-conceit and confidence in our own knowlege, is too apt to influence thoſe who mean well. But let us never forget, that the path of the juſt ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day: that it is the chriſtian's privilege to grow in grace and in ſpiritual knowlege: and that there will never come a time on this ſide the grave, in which this ſhort but comprehenſive prayer will be unſeaſonable, "What I know not, teach thou me." Such is the habitual

habitual temper of the humble inquirer into the things of God.

Of this ſort of hearers it may be preſumed there are a few among the profeſſing chriſtians aſſembled in this place. To ſuch I would beg leave to offer a word of advice. Let not the myſteriouſneſs of any doctrine revealed in the ſacred ſcriptures; nor the ſeeming difficulty of any precept; nor the improbability of the fulfilment of any promiſe; nor the apparent ſeverity of any threatening; prevail upon you, for a moment, allowedly to ſuſpect or deny the truth of it. *Thus ſaith the Lord*, ſhould ſilence every doubt, and engage your firmeſt credit. Let God be true, but every man a liar. Your buſineſs is not with men, but with God. And remember, though there is nothing *contrary* to reaſon in divine revelation, there are many things *above* it. And,

Where reaſon fails
With all her powers;
There faith prevails,
And love adores.

And,

And, among other things, let me not forget to throw in this delightful consideration, that though God might for ever glorify his justice in the condemnation of sinners, he may be just in justifying him who believeth in Jesus. And if we confess our sins, in their guilt and demerit, as committed against God, he is faithful and *just* in forgiving us our sins, and in cleansing us from all unrighteousness. 'We must so apprehend a *merciful* God, says the pious Bishop Lake, as that we forget not that he is *just*; and so remember that he is *just*, as that we forget not that he is *merciful*. We cannot omit either of these, but we shall presume or despair. If we forget him to be *just*, we shall be apt to presume; and be apt to despair, if we forget him to be *merciful*.'

INFER. 3. If every sin we commit is an offence to the person and perfections of the Godhead, how careful, how watchful, how prayerful ought those to be, who are interested in the favor of God, lest they should sin against him! for in this view of things

there

there can be no ſuch thing as a *little ſin*, as ſome people ignorantly and impiouſly talk.

In this ſpirit of watchfulneſs and care, leſt they ſhould offend God their Saviour, conſiſts that holineſs of heart and life, of which the members of Chriſt's myſtical body are made partakers. To be a chriſtian, a penitent, and a believer, and to hate ſin as oppoſite to the mind and will of God, are in fact ſo many different modes of expreſſion for the ſame thing.

If this be not your character, as profeſſors of true religion—if you expect to be ſaved by Chriſt, and do not hate every falſe way, be not deceived; you have the name without the nature of a chriſtian; a name to live and are dead.

But if otherwiſe, and your profeſſion, experience, and conduct, harmonize together, forget not who made you to differ from another. If all might have been condemned, and juſtly too; if ſome are ſaved and not all, "Why me?" ſhould be the language of every diſtinguiſhed ſoul. "By the grace of God I am what I am," ſhould be every chriſtian's motto.

Not

Not for our duties or deſerts—
But of his own abounding grace,
He works ſalvation in our hearts,
And forms a people for his praiſe.

As among this bleſſed number, the Lord help you to ſhew forth his praiſes, not only with your lips, but in your lives—to glorify him in your bodies and in your ſpirits, as not your own, but his—and to preſent both a living ſacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reaſonable ſervice. Unto Him be glory in the church by Chriſt Jeſus, throughout all ages. Amen.

PRAYER.

"O thou incomprehenſibly holy and ex-
"alted Majeſty of heaven, by whoſe kind
"providence we have been brought into
"thine houſe, to hear of the things which
"make for our everlaſting peace, give us,
"we pray thee, the hearing ear, the un-
"derſtanding mind, the tender conſcience,
"and the feeling heart. We have been
"informed out of thy bleſſed word, wherein
"the nature of true repentance conſiſts,
"and

" and what a wonderful change the power
" of divine grace produces upon the hearts
" of all who know any thing as they ought
" to know. O let thy grace operate in
" this ſupernatural manner upon every one
" of our ſouls. We are too apt to think
" lightly of ſin, and to look upon it as a
" very trifling matter, and to be no further
" concerned about it than as it ſeems to
" affect our own eternal good. But, O
" merciful Lord, diſcover it to us in all its
" vileneſs and deformity, as oppoſing thy
" honor and glory; as an act of high trea-
" ſon and rebellion againſt the crown and
" dignity of heaven's rightful Sovereign.
" Shew us, as much as our frail natures
" will bear, how diſpleaſing it is to the eyes
" of thy glory: what an offence it is to thy
" holineſs; what a daring contempt of thy
" ſovereignty and wiſdom; and what a baſe
" return for all thy goodneſs and love. In
" this view of the evil of ſin, of its aggra-
" vated guilt and demerit, may our ſouls
" be ſwallowed up in wonder, gratitude,
" and praiſe, at thy forbearing and ſparing
" mercy towards us: and may we look

" upon

"upon it as the greateſt miracle of thine
"infinite pity and grace, that we are not
"now liſting up our eyes in everlaſting
"torments, and calling for a drop of water
"to cool our tongues in vain.

"Forbid it, merciful Father, that we
"ſhould preſume to deny the freeneſs and
"greatneſs of thy mercy, by harbouring a
"thought of thy being unjuſt, if thou
"wert to conſign us over to blackneſs of
"darkneſs for ever. For we have forgotten
"the hand that feeds us. Thou haſt nou-
"riſhed and brought us up, and we have re-
"belled againſt thee. We have made light
"of thy word, oppoſed thy will, and had
"no regard for thy glory. And if thou
"wert to treat us, as we have treated thee,
"thou wouldſt ſhew us no love, no com-
"paſſion, no favor; but muſt ſay to us,
"Depart from me, ye curſed, into ever-
"laſting fire. But, O thou, whoſe tender
"mercies are over all thy works, puniſh us
"not, we beſeech thee, according to our
"ſins, nor reward us after our iniquities.
"And though we are obliged to acknow-
"lege and approve that juſtice which paſſes

"the

"the ſentence of eternal condemnation upon
"our guilty heads, we know that thou
"canſt be juſt, and the juſtifier of them
"who believe in Jeſus. Lead us then, O
"God of all grace, by thy word and Spirit,
"to this refuge, which thy wiſdom and
"love have provided for a penitent ſinner;
"and make us partakers of that faith in
"him, which whoſoever hath ſhall be ſaved.
"Remember us, O Lord, with the favor
"that thou beareſt unto thy people; O
"viſit us with thy ſalvation: that we may
"ſee the good of thy choſen; that we may
"rejoice in the gladneſs of thy people, and
"give thanks with thine inheritance. Let
"theſe, and all other our requeſts be ac-
"cepted before thee, through the prevail-
"ing interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt: for
"whom we bleſs thee; and to whom, with
"thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghoſt,
"may the church militant upon earth, and
"triumphant in heaven, aſcribe the king-
"dom, power, and glory." Amen.

SERMON

SERMON V.

PSALM li. 5.

BEHOLD, I WAS SHAPEN IN INIQUITY: AND IN SIN DID MY MOTHER CONCEIVE ME.

IT is essential to a sincere reception of the fundamental truths delivered in sacred writ, that we have a right knowlege of ourselves. Such a knowlege as arises from the reality of things, and not from our own imaginary conceits.

The generality of mankind are very apt to indulge themselves with a very high opinion which they have formed of the dignity of human nature; the amazing powers of human reason; and the all-sufficiency of

the human will, to attain to any degree of virtue or moral excellence it ſhall think fit.

That this was once the caſe, we will not preſume to deny. And that this was what the heathen philoſophers meant by the *Golden Age*, ſhall not be diſputed. But that this age has long been at an end, and that the hiſtory of man is now very different, is as inconteſtable as certainty and fact can render it.

Of this truth the penitent pſalmiſt is making an ingenuous and honeſt confeſſion in the verſe before us. Having already diſclaimed every pretence to merit, and, under an affecting ſenſe of his numerous and complicated iniquities, moſt paſſionately applied to God for his forgiving mercy, through the atoning blood of the dear Redeemer—having acknowleged his ſin, in all its vileneſs, guilt, and demerit, with ſhame, confuſion, and ſorrow—having juſtified God in all the afflictions he had threatened to bring upon him, from a conviction that his offence had been committed againſt every attribute and perfection of the divine nature—he now takes occaſion to trace the ſtreams

of

of corruption to their fountain-head; and he laments that *sinful nature* which had discovered itself so glaringly in his wicked conduct, which he here mentions as an aggravation of his crime. And the sense of the passage is this; "Nor is this the only sin which I have reason to acknowlege and bewail before thee; for this filthy stream leads me to a corrupt fountain. And, upon a serious review of my heart and life, I find, that I am guilty of innumerable other sins; and that this heinous offence, though drawn forth by external temptations, yet was indeed the proper fruit of my own *vile nature*, which, without the restraints of thy grace, ever was, and still is like to be, inclinable and ready to commit these and ten thousand other sins, as occasion offers itself. For which contrariety of my *very nature* to thine, thou mayst justly loath and condemn me; and for which I humbly beg thy pardon and grace†."

This plain and natural construction of the place, hath been violently opposed by a

† Poole in loc.

ſet of people, whom, for diſtinction's ſake, we call Socinians and Pelagians; both of whom, united in defence of the dignity of man and of his moral rectitude, as well as in oppoſing the Bible, agree in rejecting this interpretation of the text. They tell us, that the pſalmiſt only means to aſcribe his ſin to natural infirmity, and human frailty. What is this but to extenuate, inſtead of aggravating his offence? the latter of which is evidently the deſign in this place, as it is of every gracious heart in the exerciſe of true repentance. They tell us again, in order to evade the mortifying truth plainly held forth to us, that David refers here to the ſinful corruption that cleaved to his parents in his conception. But what reaſon have we to think he is accuſing his mother, inſtead of himſelf, for his ſin? And why ſhould not his father as well as his mother be mentioned upon ſuch an occaſion? And where would be the force of his ſaying, my parents ſinned in my natural generation, but I have not derived any ſinfulneſs from them; therefore, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity?—Such, alas! are the

the wretched ſhifts which the enemies of God and his word are driven to make uſe of, in order to ſupport their oppoſition to ſimple truth.

Let the judgment therefore of the beſt and wiſeſt men the world ever produced, triumph over the cavils and objections of thoſe who err through pride and ignorance; not knowing the ſcriptures nor the power of God. And then we ſhall underſtand the words in their plain and literal ſenſe, as leading us to the conſideration of one of the moſt important and fundamental doctrines of divine revelation, that of Original Sin. "Behold, I was ſhapen in iniquity: and in ſin did my mother conceive me."

In the diſcuſſion of this intereſting paſſage, I ſhall obſerve the following method:

I. To explain and confirm the doctrine it contains.

II. Take occaſion to obviate the charges brought againſt it, as making God the author of ſin, and as being irrational and unjuſt.

III. Shew, that every chriſtian, who is ſuitably convinced of it by the Spirit of God, will acknowlege it as a matter of deep humiliation and unfeigned ſelf-abaſement.

While I am purſuing this great ſubject according to the ability which God giveth, may every undue prejudice be removed from your minds, with all careleſſneſs and inattention! And may the Spirit of grace ſeal divine inſtruction upon every one of your hearts!

I. Firſt, then, I am to explain and prove the great truth implied in the text.

In the beginning of the world when God created man upon the earth, it pleaſed him to make of one blood all nations of men. With that one it was his ſovereign will to enter into covenant, as the federal head and repreſentative of all his poſterity; ſo that the whole human nature is to be conſidered as in him.

The ſum of this covenant into which God entered with his creature, is with the greateſt propriety ſaid to be, that Adam, as the

the moral head and representative of all his posterity, should give perfect obedience to the law of God written upon his heart, upon pain of forfeiting that state of happiness, which could only be preserved in a way of holiness. To suppose that this law was not written upon his heart, is to suppose that the image of God, in which he was created, consisted principally, if not wholly, in his natural and not in his moral excellence; and also, that he was born in a state inferior to that of the heathens themselves since the fall of man: of whom it is said, "these having the law written upon their hearts, are a law unto themselves."

As a proof of his intire subjection to and supreme love of his Creator and Sovereign, as well as of grateful acknowlegement of the divine goodness, he was not to eat of the tree of knowlege of good and evil. So we are informed in Gen. ii. 17. "And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: *but* of the tree of the knowlege of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt

ſurely die: or dying thou ſhalt die." And in Gen. iii. 3. we find our firſt parents teſtifying their knowlege of this, by the reply they make to the queſtion the ſerpent put to them.

The nature of the threatening denounced in caſe of diſobedience, has been a matter of much diſpute and controverſy in every age. Some telling us that it only meant a liableneſs to loſe that natural life which God had given; others, that man was created mortal, and that the penalty denounced againſt him for diſobedience, was the loſs of ſpiritual life. Whereas there is very little doubt but that it implied both theſe, and more than either of them, even the forfeiture of natural, ſpiritual, and eternal life. Of natural, which ſhould immediately follow and begin in him by infirmities, decays, terrors, and diſtreſs of body—of ſpiritual, by the guilt and power of ſin, in that he ſhould be dead in treſpaſſes and ſins—of eternal, in the miſery of ſoul and body for ever.

Many of the difficulties and diſputes which have ariſen from the conſideration of

this great ſubject may be aſcribed to an ignorance of what is to be underſtood by death. Mankind in general have no other idea under this term than that of the deſtruction of our being. Whereas it is in fact nothing more nor leſs than an alteration in the *manner* of exiſtence; whereby the ſcene is entirely changed. People, who are ſaid to die, loſe their accuſtomed view of things, and can no longer have that intercourſe which had been maintained during that *kind* of *life*, whereof ſuch *death* is the extinction. Thus, when Adam loſt his ſpiritual *life*, which was the immediate and neceſſary conſequence of his ſin, the ſcene changed in a ſpiritual reſpect; and ſin had the very ſame effect upon his moral and intellectual powers with relation to ſpiritual objects and ſubjects, as death has upon the natural powers of any being with regard to natural objects and ſubjects.

That our firſt parent was and ought to conſidered as the head and repreſentative of his deſcendants, appears very evidently from the manner of expreſſion made uſe of

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in Rom. v. throughout; and in 1 Cor. xv. 22.* That in this Character he failed in performing the terms of the covenant; that he forfeited all the bleſſings annexed to perfect obedience, and incurred the penalty due to diſobedience, is as evident. The puniſhment of his offence was the loſs of that holineſs wherein, and of that happineſs whereunto he was originally created. Of both which he was deprived at once, when he loſt the image and the favor of God.

Now, as the whole of *human nature* is to be conſidered as virtually in him, as a common perſon, as a repreſentative head; what was done by him, is *ſaid* to have been done by thoſe whom he repreſented. So that

* Adam was not only the firſt, but the head of all men; as he was at firſt all men that were in the world *formally*, ſo he was all men that ſhould be in the world *repreſentatively*: ſo that God looked upon Adam as upon one in whom all the generations that ever ſhould live upon earth were repreſented; and ſo all men that ſhould be, were preſent unto God in that one man that then was.

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when

when he ſinned, they ſinned in him; when he fell, they fell with him; his ſin, guilt, and puniſhment, were all charged upon his poſterity.

The moſt perfect illuſtration of this point is ſet before us, in what is ſaid upon a different occaſion in the epiſtle to the Hebrews; where we are told, that Abraham in his return from the ſlaughter of the kings, who had taken his brother, and all that he had captive into their hands,—met Melchiſedec the prieſt of the moſt high God; to whom alſo Abraham gave a tenth part of all the ſpoils of war. And as I may ſo ſay, adds the inſpired penman of that epiſtl , Levi alſo, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in *Abraham*; and the reaſon aſſigned for this aſſertion is, that *he* was yet in the loins of Abraham his *father*, when Melchiſedec met him: and therefore *he* is ſaid to have done what his father did, though himſelf *unborn*. Heb. vii. 9, 10.

The caſe is exactly ſimilar and equally true with alluſion to the ſubject under conſideration. The whole human nature, in the loins of Adam, by his ſin, loſt

loſt the image, forfeited the favor, and incurred the diſpleaſure of the great Lord of all. What he was, they were; what he did, they did. Though they did not in their own perſons either converſe with the ſerpent, or ſtretch out their hand to take of the forbidden fruit; yet, as he was a public perſon, ſtanding in the room of all his poſterity, therefore his ſin, being not merely the ſin of his perſon, but of the *human nature*, is juſtly imputed to all mankind.

That theſe things are ſo, let the following paſſages of ſacred writ certify. "Wherefore, by one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin, and ſo death paſſed upon *all men*, for that all have ſinned," or as others read it, in whom all have ſinned; but either way, it is a full proof that Adam was a public perſon, and that in him all his poſterity ſinned and fell: for if ſuch die as have never committed any actual ſin themſelves, then it will follow, that they ſinned in this one man, in whoſe loins they were. Rom. v. 12. and ſo death paſſed upon them as the proper

wages

wages and punishment of sin, including death *temporal*, *spiritual*, and *eternal*. For that they are all of them included, is evident from the comparison the apostle is drawing between the first and second Adam. As the former entailed upon his posterity temporal, spiritual, and eternal death by his sin, so Christ says of himself, "I am the resurrection and the life," with reference to natural life—"He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," with reference to spiritual life—"and whoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die," with reference to eternal life. John ii. 25, 26.

The same doctrine is taught again in the 14th verse, where it is observed that death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned, after the similitude of Adam's transgression, that is, by their own personal act; and therefore could be exposed to death, only in consequence of their deriving guilt and pollution from Adam; who, says the apostle, is the figure of him that was to come. For, as from the sin of Adam we inherit guilt and death,

so

ſo by the obedience of Chriſt, righteouſneſs and liſe are derived to the believing ſoul.

Again, in the 19th verſe, we are expreſsly told, that by *one man's diſobedience*, or fall, many were made ſinners—were conſtituted ſuch by the divine appointment of God: and in the verſe preceding it, by the offence of *one* judgment came upon *all men* unto *condemnation*. So that if there be any meaning in words, we muſt either reject the ſacred ſcriptures as advancing falſhood, or acknowlege the humiliating doctrine of the imputation of Adam's ſin and guilt to all his poſterity.

Thus the truly pious and learned archbiſhop Uſher explains the matter when delivering himſelf upon this ſubject, 'Sin, ſays he, is either imputed or inherent. *Our ſin* in Adam is imputed; in whom as *we lived*, ſo alſo *we ſinned*. For in our firſt parents *every one of us* did commit that firſt ſin, which was the cauſe of all other: and ſo we all are become ſubject to the imputation of Adam's fall, both for the tranſgreſſion and the guiltineſs. For their ſin in eating the forbidden fruit, was the ſin of *all men*;

and

and we therein became *sinners* and *guilty of condemnation.* So that they did not only lose for themselves the image and favor of God, but withal deprived their posterity of that blessed state; and plunged them into the contrary; bringing damnation upon themselves and upon us all.'—

What was the judgment of those wise and holy men who compiled that most excellent body of divine truths called the Homilies, we learn from the following passage extracted from one of them—'As BEFORE the fall Adam was most beautiful and precious; so now he was most wretched in the sight of his Lord and Maker. Instead of the image of God, he was now become the image of the devil; instead of the citizen of heaven, he was now become the bondslave of hell, having in himself no one part of his former purity, but being altogether defiled, and therefore by the just judgment of God condemned to everlasting death.—This so great and miserable a plague, if it had only rested on Adam who first offended, it had been much easier; but it fell not only on him, but also on his posterity

terity and children for ever. So that the whole brood of Adam's race ſhould ſuſtain the ſelf-ſame fall and puniſhment, which their forefather by his offence moſt juſtly had deſerved.'

Nor is it leſs certain that mankind inherit a *corrupt* as well as a *guilty nature* from their firſt father Adam. And this is what the pſalmiſt means particularly to acknowlege in the text, "Behold I was ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did my mother conceive me."

To be ſhapen in iniquity is to have a natural love and inclination to it. To be under the power and dominion of it. And to be inſenſible to the evil and danger of it. And that this is the caſe with all mankind, is as indiſputable as experience, fact, and the truth of God can render it.

God, it is ſaid, created man in his own image, or as the wiſe man tells us, upright: in *knowlege*, in *righteouſneſs*, and *true holineſs*. He was poſſeſſed of divine light or wiſdom in his underſtanding; rectitude or conformity to the rule of righteouſneſs in his will; and purity in his affections. We have the

beſt

beſt authority for maintaining, that the moral image of God, or that original righteouſneſs with which man was at firſt endued, conſiſted in theſe things; becauſe, when in ſcripture language, the real chriſtian has that image reſtored upon his ſoul, he is ſaid to be "*Light* in the Lord, to become a ſervant of *Righteouſneſs*, and to have his fruit unto *Holineſs*."

Immediately after the fall, Adam begat a ſon in his own likeneſs and after his own image. What that image or likeneſs was, we learn from the ſad hiſtory and character of Cain.

It might be eaſy to ſhew, that all the errors and hereſies that have infected the world, met in this firſt-born ſon of Adam. He was a *Pelagian*, an advocate for the power of nature and free-will to turn to God and to ſerve him: he went in his own ſtrength to worſhip God, fully perſuaded that he could do it ſo as to be accepted of him. He was a *Socinian*, and would not believe in the perſon and atonement of the God-Man Mediator; though he enjoyed

the ſame revelation of the promiſed Seed as his brother Abel. He was a *Deiſt*, inſenſible that he was a fallen, corrupt creature, and ſtood in need of a ſin-offering. He was a *Phariſee*, and therefore, like him in Luke xviii. whoſe worſhip conſiſted only in thankſgiving, without either prayer, repentance, or faith; he brought only of the fruit of the ground for a thank-offering. He was a *Papiſt*, and held the Popiſh doctrine of the meritorioufneſs of good works; inſomuch that he avowedly reſented God's diſregard of his ſervices. Gen. iv. 5. In ſhort, he was the true picture of every natural, unregenerate man, for he was a *formal impenitent hypocrite*. Such was the degenerate offſpring of a degenerate parent.

And indeed, how could it be otherwiſe? who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? a corrupt tree cannot, in the nature of things, bring forth good fruit. And therefore, when our bleſſed Lord, in the remarkable conference between himſelf and Nicodemus, is enforcing the abſolute neceſſity of regeneration; the great reaſon he

assigns for it is this, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." It has nothing in it which is gracious, spiritual, or divine; because derived from that which is destitute of every good thing. The copy cannot be better than the original, nor the effect nobler than the cause. No stream can rise higher than the fountain: it is no wonder therefore if that which is poisonous, bring forth a poisonous seed. The natural constitution of every thing is transmitted by natural generation; man himself is unclean, and all his issue are so likewise.

Hence the privation of that moral beauty and excellence which was stampt upon mankind in creation. Nor are we allowed to understand it, so as that the mind of man in its present state, is like a fair sheet of paper, capable of receiving any impress. There is in every man not only a want of original righteousness, but a positive corruption and an innate pollution, connatural with his very existence: which discovers itself long before it is possible for any external cause, either of corrupt principles imbibed, or bad example received, to pro-

duce ſuch an effect *. For, "from *within* out of the *heart* of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetouſneſs, wickedneſs, deceit, laſciviouſneſs, an evil eye, blaſphemy, pride, fooliſhneſs; all theſe evil things come from *within*, and defile the man," Mark vii. 21, 22, 23. This ſhews, that the original root and ſpring-head of all iniquity, is the *inbred corruption* of the *heart*.

As to the *univerſality* of this corruption with reſpect to all mankind, or the *whole human nature*, who can for a moment diſpute it, after an attentive peruſal of the hiſtory of the world in the records of infallible truth? How ſoon was it declared by a voice from heaven, "not only that the wickedneſs of man was great upon the earth,

* The uprightneſs and integrity of man wherein he was firſt created, is now loſt, the whole ſoul and body corrupted, the whole harmony of man diſſolved: ſo that we are not only deprived of grace, but defiled with ſin: the image of God is not only raſed out, but the image of the devil is engraven upon our ſouls: all men, and all of men, being now quite out of order.

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but

but that every imagination of the thoughts of his *heart* was only evil continually?" Gen. vi. 5. 'How came it to paſs, ſays a judicious divine, that man's wickedneſs ſhould ſwell ſo high? Whence did it ſpring? From the *imagination*. Though there might be ſinful imaginations, might not the ſuperior faculty preſerve itſelf untainted? Alas! that was defiled; the *imagination of the thoughts* was evil. But, though running thoughts might wheel about in his mind, yet they might leave no ſtamp or impreſſion upon the will and affections. Yes, they did; the imagination of the thoughts of his *heart* was evil. Surely all could not be under ſuch a blemiſh: were there not now and then ſome pure flaſhes of the mind? No, not one. *Every imagination*. But granting that they were evil, might there not be ſome fleeting good mixed with them; as a poiſonous toad hath ſomething uſeful? No, *only evil*. Well, but there might be ſome intervals of thinking, and though there was no good thought, yet evil ones were not always rolling there. Yes they were *continually*; not a moment of time that

man was free from them. One would ſcarce imagine ſuch an inward neſt of wickedneſs, but God hath affirmed it; and if any man ſhould deny it, his own heart would give him the lye ‡.'

If we conſult the prophet Iſaiah reſpecting the moral character and conduct of thoſe in his day, who had the greateſt advantages and obligations to be virtuous and pious, we ſhall find him very ſparing of his panegyrics upon the dignity of human nature. The beſt he could ſay of his own countrymen was, "Ah ſinful nation; a people laden with iniquity; a ſeed of evil doers; children that are corrupters: the whole head is ſick, and the whole heart is faint: for from the crown of the head to the ſole of the foot, there is no ſoundneſs." Such was their inbred pollution, their depravity and corruption. See other paſſages to this effect. Deut. ix. Pſalm lxxviii. Exod. xxxii. Judges ii. Num. xiv. Ezek. xx. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15—17. And to aſſure us that

‡ Charnock, vol. II,

their neighbours were not a whit ſuperior to themſelves, we find them frequently indicted and condemned for learning their works, and for imitating them in their abominations. Iſa. i.

That the prophet Jeremiah was obliged to bear the ſame teſtimony concerning the age in which he lived, is ſufficiently clear from what is aſſerted in the 17th chapter and at the 9th verſe; where he lays down a general propoſition applicable to *all men*, becauſe there was not one ſingle exception to it; "*the Heart* is deceitful above all things and deſperately wicked: who can know it?" The reply that is given in the following words, "I, the Lord, ſearch the heart," will afford us a valuable obſervation to confirm the point in hand.

For if the deceitfulneſs of the human heart be too intricate for human diſcovery; if the depth of its iniquity be unfathomable by creatures; and if it be the peculiar prerogative of the all-wiſe God to detect the one, and to ſearch out the other, then we cannot err in ſubmitting our judgment to his in this matter; and it cannot be leſs

than impious to difregard, ſuſpect, or deny, what he hath been pleaſed to deliver upon this ſubject.

Nor need we go far to know what is the judgment of him who cannot be miſtaken, and who will not deceive, reſpecting the moral ſtate of his rational creatures. For the Lord himſelf is repreſented to us, "as looking down from heaven upon the children of men, to ſee if there were *any* that did underſtand and ſeek after God:" ſo as to love and fear him, to truſt and obey him, and who diligently ſought his face and favor. The ſentence pronounced upon the whole human race, in conſequence of this inquiry, was, "They are *all* gone aſide from God, and from the rule which he hath given them; they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one," Pſalm xiv.

Leſt we ſhould imagine that this account of things is deſcriptive of a peculiar ſet of people, uncommonly depraved and corrupt, the apoſtle Paul adopts the very ſtile and expreſſion of the old Teſtament writers, in *his* hiſtory of the moral ſtate and character

of

of mankind. What then? are we better than they? are we ſuperior to our forefathers in attainments of piety and virtue? No; in no wiſe. Look into the Gentile world, and, notwithſtanding all their improvements in polite literature and philoſophy, profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beaſts, and creeping things. They worſhipped and ſerved the creature more than the Creator. "They were filled with all unrighteouſneſs, fornication, wickedneſs, covetouſneſs, malicioufneſs; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whiſperers, backbiters, haters of God, deſpiteful, proud, boaſters, inventers of evil things, diſobedient to parents, without underſtanding, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who knowing the judgment of God, that they which do ſuch things are worthy of death, not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them that do them," Rom. i. Look into the Jewiſh hiſtory, and though they had the oracles of God

God committed unto them, yet they made no better use of the light of revelation, than the heathens did of the light of nature and reason: "for, says the same inspired writer, we have proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are *all* under sin; as it is written, There is *none* righteous, no *not one*: there is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God. They are *all* gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is *none* that doeth good, no *not one*. So that *every* mouth must be stopped, and *all the world* must become guilty before God," Rom. iii.

How any man upon earth can suppose that the present age should be so far improved and refined, as to be an exception to the whole history of the world ever since the fall of man, must be left to modesty and common-sense to determine. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh now, as much as it was in the days of our blessed Lord. May we not say *now* with full as much propriety as Job did of old time, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an un-

* unclean?"—The man therefore who can imagine, that he has less depravity in him than has been common to his fellow-men in every age and place, must be possessed of a more than common degree of pride and conceit; must be blinded by a peculiar share of self-ignorance; and must pay but little regard to what the scriptures have said of human nature. The moral corruption of which appears most evidently to be *universal:* and that not only with respect to all men, but to every thing in every man. "Their *throat* is an open sepulchre: with their *tongues* they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their *lips:* whose *mouth* is full of cursing and bitterness. Their *feet* are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their *ways:* and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their *eyes*," Rom. iii.

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* Homo peccator genuit hominem sine dubio peccatorem, quia de naturâ vitiata non nisi natura nascitur vitiosa, id est, peccatrix. Matt. vii. 17, 18. Luke vi. 44. Matt. xii. 33.

S. August.

And

And this is the moral character of man as man. "For all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God," Rom. iii. 23. "The *natural man* perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs unto him," 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The *carnal mind* † is enmity againſt God: for it is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"—becauſe of its innate propenſity to that which is oppoſite thereto. So then, they that are in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God: they that are, ſuch as every man is in his natural birth, or as born of the fleſh, have a contrariety in their nature

† Φρονημα της Σαρκος—that is, the beſt thoughts, affections, inclinations, and motions, of the mind of a natural man. This noun is derived from the verb Φρονεω, ſapio—which is a general word, comprehending the actions and operations both of the *underſtanding* and *will*: it is in the ſcripture applied to both, but moſt commonly to the actions of the *will* and *affections*. Raphelius ſhews, that the phraſe Φρονειν τα τινος, in the Greek claſſics, means, to be of the ſame ſentiment or party with any one, to favor him, to be on his ſide—ſo that the carnal mind favors and joins that party which is againſt God.

LEIGH, Crit. Sacr.

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to the holy will of God, Rom. viii. 7, 8. "Who are dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and who are *by nature* ‡ the children of wrath," Eph. ii. 1—3. "Having the *understanding* darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," Eph. iv. 18. And their tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the *whole body*, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell, James iii. 6.

Thus the whole man in spirit, soul, and body, is polluted by inherent corruption and sin. It has produced a miserable blind-

‡ Φυσει, naturâ. Tria significat natura. 1. Est idem quod rei cujusque nativa constitutio. 2. Sumitur pro principiis rerum naturalium internis. 3. Internas rei qualitates, seu naturales proprietates à principiis illis quasi fluentes, declarat.

LEIGH. Crit. Sacr.

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neſs and ignorance in the *underſtanding*. Iſa. lvi. 10. 1 Pet. i. 14. 2 Pet. iii. 5. Prov. xxx. 2, 3. Jer. iv. 22. Rom. iii. 11. 1 Cor. ii. 14. The *will* is perverted ſo as to be entirely averſe from its chief good, and inclined to embrace all evil. Job xxi. 14, 15. Jer. vi. 16. John viii. 44. The *affections* are proſtituted to the ſervice of ſin, and the *members* of the body yield themſelves as inſtruments of iniquity unto iniquity. Rom. iii. 13, 19.—vi, 16, 19. Matt. v. 28, 29. 2 Pet. ii. 14. James iv. 4, 5. So that the whole human nature is utterly devoid of all true goodneſs, and has in it the principle and ſeed of all actual ſin. Rom. vii. 14—21. And therefore that great man ſpoke a certain, though a very humbling truth, when he called the heart, 'the root and fountain of all other ſin, from whence every actual abomination doth proceed. Atheiſm, and pride, and baſeneſs, and cruelty, and profaneneſs, and every other vice which the moſt wicked wretch in the world is guilty of, doth proceed from hence. Hell itſelf, which is the proper place

place of sin, is not more full of sin, for the kind of it, than our natures are *.'

And this is the doctrine the church of England intends to advance, in that form of sound words contained in the 9th Article; wherein she speaks expressly upon this subject, and from scripture authority acquaints us, that 'Original Sin is the *fault* and *corruption* of the *nature* of *every* man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone † from original righteousness, and is of his *own nature* inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth *always* contrary to the Spirit; and therefore, in *every* person born into the world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.'

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* Bishop Wilkins—whose fine sense, learning, and philosophy, were never disputed—and who observes in another place—'this will further appear, if we look upon *our own natures* in the rage, blasphemies, baseness, and madness of other men's lives; there being not any kind of evil which either man or devil hath committed, but there are in *our natures* the principles and inclinations to it; the best of us being *by nature* as bad as the worst of sinners.'

† Perlongissimè, as far as possible.

An article of religion this confirmed by the three-fold teſtimony of experience, fact, and the word of God: of the truth of which, every moral creature is an awful inſtance. Inſomuch, that a man need only look into the hiſtory of the world as founded upon matter of fact, or honeſtly conſult his own heart, to be convinced that his *natural* temper, diſpoſition, and inclinations, are directly oppoſite to what they ought to be. For God requires us to love him ſupremely; but the native bent of our hearts is to love ourſelves ſupremely. God commands us to live to him ultimately; but there is a ſtrong propenſity in our hearts to ſet ourſelves in the place of God: a propenſity, which nothing but ſupernatural grace can counteract, to live to ourſelves ultimately. God demands of his creatures that they ſhould delight in him ſuperlatively, above all things; whereas the native tendency of our hearts is to delight in that which is not God, wholly. If this be not a demonſtrable proof that we are very far gone from original righteouſneſs, and that we are naturally inclined to evil, the ſhining of the

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ſun is no proof of its being a body of light. And if this be not a faulty, as well as a corrupt nature in man, then it is no fault in a creature to ſet himſelf above the Creator; it is no treaſon in him to attempt to dethrone his rightful Sovereign, and uſurp his authority; it is not blameworthy in him to ſay of himſelf inſtead of God, "Thy will be done." But the truth is, that this temper is the fault and corruption of every man that is born into the world, and deſerveth God's wrath and eternal indignation.

II. But we muſt haſten to the conſideration of the ſecond point; which was to obviate ſome difficulties, and anſwer ſome objections, which the corrupt heart of man is ever ready to offer againſt the truth of God.

It hath been objected to this fundamental truth of chriſtianity, with which all its other eſſential truths muſt ſtand or fall, that it is inconſiſtent with the moral juſtice and equity, as well as the goodneſs of the bleſſed God: that it was unjuſt that Adam

ſhould be conſtituted the repreſentative of all his poſterity without their conſent, and that they ſhould be actually puniſhed for what was not their perſonal tranſgreſſion. Is not this to puniſh the innocent with the guilty? ſay our opponents.

But let any man conſult his own reaſon, and aſk himſelf, whether Adam was not as likely to continue in his firſt ſtate, as any of his poſterity could be? and was it not rather an act of grace in God to accept the obedience of *one* man, in the name of his whole race, when he might with infinite juſtice and propriety have demanded perfect obedience from *every one* of them in their own perſons? Nor ſhould we forget, that it was as much for Adam's *perſonal* intereſt to obey perfectly, as for that of any of his poſterity; and much more ſo, as he might have been the happy inſtrument of conveying unſpeakable and eternal bleſſings to his offſpring for ever. Neither is it irrational to aſſert, that had all mankind been preſent in the garden, and had God propoſed the acceptance of the obedience of one in the room of the whole, an *univerſal, unanimous*

conſent,

consent could not possibly have failed. Be ashamed therefore, thou *unreasonable* and *impious* creature, ever again to impeach the justice and goodness of God in this equitable and gracious constitution of things.

Again—It hath been inquired by our opponents, 'If the sin of Adam be imputed to us, and its guilt be charged upon us, because we were in his loins, why then are not the sins of our immediate parents reckoned ours, seeing we were in their loins before our birth?'

The answer to this objection is easy. Because Adam was constituted the *covenant-head* and *representative* of *his* posterity, but our immediate parents are not of *theirs*.

'Oh, but say some, can it be consistent with the divine perfections to bring mankind into the world under such distressing circumstances as these?'—"Nay but O man, who art thou that replieſt against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" the truth is evident from universal, unexceptionable, stubborn fact. And there-

ſore, the very queſtion implies a diſpoſition to charge God with unrighteouſneſs, and to deny, "that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

'But as we are what God makes us, is not this to make God the author of ſin?' —This is a very common, and, at firſt appearance, a very ſpecious objection, and is very apt to ſtartle the minds of the weak and unthinking: whereas there is in truth no force at all in it. The objection itſelf ariſes, either from a wilful ignorance or from a miſconception of the doctrine we maintain, by ſuppoſing that there is ſome evil quality, ſome corrupt principle infuſed or implnated in the nature of man, by the Author of his being. Whereas the poſitive corruption of our nature is not any thing created by God, but ariſes ſolely from a *privative* cauſe, and from the abſence of *poſitive* good principles. The creature, being naturally deſtitute of the image of God, and blind to his glory and beauty, forſakes God and things ſpiritual, and embraces the world and things temporal. Sin itſelf, in its nature, fault, and effects, is nothing more nor leſs than a

retiring

retiring from God into ſelf; an averſion from him and the ſupreme love of him; and a converſion to creatures and created things, with an inordinate degree of ſelf-love. Original Sin, or inbred corruption, is that diſpoſition we all have naturally to do this. A diſpoſition which we derive from, or in conſequence of being born of corrupt parents.

It hath been a matter of long and labored diſquiſition among the wiſe and curious, to find out how, or in what way, the certain modus in which, this corrupt *biaſs* is tranſmitted into the ſoul: and many there are, who have bewildered themſelves in endleſs mazes, in order to ſolve, if poſſible, this important queſtion, Πόθεν το Κακον, whence the origin of evil? and how have they darkened counſel with words without knowlege! how have they oppoſed either the omnipotence or the preſcience of the Godhead! how have they reaſoned themſelves into the moſt ſhocking infidelity!

The caſe is plainly this, ſays the moſt judicious and maſterly writer upon this ſubject the world has yet produced: 'When

God made man at first, he implanted in him two kind of principles. There was an *inferior* kind, which may be called NATURAL, being the principles of mere human nature, such as self-love; with those natural appetites and passions which belong to the *nature of man*, in which his love to his own liberty, honor, and pleasure, were exercised: these, when alone, and left to themselves, are what the scriptures sometimes call FLESH. Besides these there were *superior* principles, that were spiritual, holy, and divine, summarily comprehended in divine love; wherein consisted the spiritual image of God, and man's righteousness and true holiness: which are called in scripture the *divine nature*. These superior principles were given to possess the throne, and maintain an *absolute dominion* in the heart: the other to be *wholly subordinate* and subservient. And while things continued thus, all things were in excellent order, peace, and beautiful harmony, and in their proper and perfect state. These divine principles thus reigning, were the dignity, life, happiness, and glory, of man's nature.

When

When man ſinned, and broke God's covenant, and fell under his curſe, theſe ſuperior principles left his heart: for indeed God then left him; that communion with God, on which theſe principles depended, intirely ceaſed; the Holy Spirit, that divine inhabitant, forſook the houſe: therefore immediately the ſuperior principles wholly ceaſed. So light ceaſes in a room when the candle is withdrawn; and thus man was left in a ſtate of darkneſs, woful corruption, and ruin; nothing but *fleſh* without *ſpirit*. The inferior principles of ſelf-love, and natural appetite, which were given only to ſerve, being alone, and left to themſelves, *of courſe* became reigning principles; having no ſuperior principles to regulate or controul them, they became abſolute maſters of the heart. The immediate conſequence of which was, a *fatal cataſtrophe*, a turning of all things upſide down, and the ſucceſſion of a ſtate of the moſt odious and dreadful confuſion. Man did immediately ſet up for *himſelf*, and for the objects of his private affections, as ſupreme; and ſo they took place of GOD. Man's love to his own

honor, ſeparate intereſt, and private pleaſure, which before was wholly ſubordinate unto love to God, and regard to his authority and glory, now diſpoſes him to purſue thoſe objects without any regard to God's honor or law; becauſe there is *no true* regard to theſe divine things left in him. In conſequence of which, he ſeeks thoſe objects as much when againſt God's honor and law, as when agreeable to them. And God ſtill continuing ſtrictly to require ſupreme regard to himſelf, hence immediately ariſes enmity in the heart, now wholly under the power of ſelf-love.

Thus it is eaſy to give an account, how total corruption of heart ſhould follow from man's eating the forbidden fruit, without God's infuſing or implanting any evil principle in the heart, and ſo becoming the author of depravity. Only God's *withdrawing*, and man's being left to his own *natural principles*, is ſufficient to account for his becoming *entirely corrupt*. And as Adam's nature became corrupt, without God's putting any evil into his heart, ſo does the nature of his *poſterity*. God having dealt with

with Adam as the head of his posterity, and treating them as one, he deals with his posterity as having *all sinned in him.* And therefore, as God withdrew communion from their common head, so he with-holds the same from all the members; whereby they come into the world mere *flesh*, and entirely under the government of natural principles, and therefore *wholly corrupt* *.'

All this every real Christian is brought to own and confess: that he was born in a state of guilt, deserving all that wrath which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness †—and of corruption, as having a nature in him averse from, and repugnant to the nature of God: that his whole inward man, his judgment, will and affections, are the very contrast of what they ought to be‡. This was what David meant, when he said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me:" and

* Edwards on Original Sin.

† Nec citiùs natum, quàm damnatum. BERN.

‡ Decalogus inversus.

The law of God turned upside down.

this

this is what every true penitent will lament as the bitter fountain from which all the corrupt ſtreams of actual wickedneſs flow: not charging God fooliſhly, by laying his corrupt paſſions, inclinations, and tempers at his door, but taking the guilt and ſhame of all to himſelf, as the degenerate offſpring of degenerate parents: fully aſſured that however difficult or myſterious the thing in itſelf may be, it is, as St. Auſtin obſerves, '*juſto ſed occulto Dei judicio*, by the juſt, though to us myſterious, appointment of God.'

III. To ſhew that this is the diſpoſition of every true penitent, was the third point to be illuſtrated from the words of the text. And a diſpoſition too, peculiar to ſuch as are, or ſhall be poſſeſſed of the ſpecial grace of God.

The ſacred volume hath not left us without ſeveral inſtances of this truth: by which we learn that the holieſt characters have been diſtinguiſhed for it. And among the reſt we may trace it very clearly in the hiſtory of Iſaiah. For when that great man

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was favored with a vision of the glory of the person and worship of Jehovah our Saviour*, as we find recorded in the sixth chapter of his prophecy, it produced this very necessary effect; it led him into a more affecting sense of his own vileness: and therefore we hear him crying out at the sight, "Wo is *me*, for *I* am undone, for I am a *man* of unclean lips:" referring to that corruption of his *person* and *nature*, an humbling view of which could not but follow upon so amazing a discovery of the infinite holiness of the divine nature.

Similar to this, is that particular circumstance mentioned in the history of Job; where, after a long debate with his three friends, in which he had been ignorant and hasty enough to assert that his righteousness was more than God's, we find him

* That it was the Lord Jesus Christ, with a sight of whose glory the prophet was favored, is evident from what is asserted in John xii. 37, 38, 39, 40, 41. Let the reader compare this with the first ten verses of Isa. vi. and after that let him doubt, if he can, whether the Lord Jesus Christ be one of the persons in Jehovah.

humbled

humbled before God in the lowest dust of self-abasement, and adopting the truth in the text with personal application to himself: "Behold, *I* am vile, I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes." He not only deplored those actual iniquities which he had committed against God, but lamented that *corrupt nature*, and abhorred *himself* for that evil within him, which rendered him capapable of doing what he ought not to have done. Job. xl. 41.

Nor is the great apostle of the Gentiles a less striking instance of this point: for we find him lamenting the inbred corruption of his nature more than all the outward and particular sins of which he had ever been guilty. "I know, says he, that in *me*, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth *no good* thing; I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and that when I would do good, evil is present with me. O *wretched man*, that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!" Rom. vi.

And that this disposition was never designed to distinguish a prophet or an apostle

tle from any other christian, but that it belongs to every christian, as such, is indisputably certain from that passage in the prophecy of Ezekiel, xxxvi. 31. where the Lord is pleased to declare concerning those who experience the fulfilment of that rich promise contained in the preceding verses, that they shall then "lothe *themselves* in *their own sight*:" then, when he shall give them a new heart, and put his spirit within them, they shall be humbled before him, and abhor *themselves* for their *corrupt and sinful nature*.

And indeed how can it be otherwise? The reason of such a temper as this is plain: because it is their *sinful nature* which pollutes the best duties of the holiest saint upon earth: it intermixes itself with all his spiritual services: it opposeth every gracious desire of his heart, every pious resolution of his mind, every righteous act of his life. And sometimes the flesh lusteth against the spirit, so that they cannot do the things that they would. When they would do good, evil is present with them. And no doubt it was this which forced that humbling confession

ſion from the prophet, "All our righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags." For as our article moſt ſcripturally aſſerts, 'This infection of nature doth remain in them that are regenerated.' It diſpoſes their underſtandings to receive error; it excites their wills to rebel againſt God; and it tempts their affections to wander from that object in which they ought ſupremely, unvariably, and eternally to delight. Yea, and there are certain ſeaſons, in which thoſe who wiſh to love God moſt, and to ſerve him beſt, are, through the indwelling corruption of their nature, led moſt grievouſly to offend him. "In many things we offend all"—ſaid one apoſtle. "What I hate, that do I"—ſaid another. "There is not a juſt man upon earth who liveth and ſinneth not," might they all ſay. For the fleſh, or corrupt nature luſteth always againſt the ſpirit, or new nature. No wonder, therefore, if the real chriſtian be found continually lamenting that moſt, which is moſt diſpleaſing and oppoſite to God, and moſt deſtructive of the holineſs and happineſs of his own ſoul. Nor can

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any man have a just right and title to the name of christian, till he feel this disposition within himself: till he be brought by divine grace to see sufficient cause, why he should lament the *inbred corruption* of his *nature*, *more* than all the sinful actions of his life: and should say with the penitent heart of the Psalmist, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

APPLICATION.

The doctrine of the text, which hath been illustrated and maintained upon the present occasion, may serve to discover to us the absurdity, the ignorance, and the vanity of self-valuation. The dignity of human nature is a subject of frequent discourse with many who *profess* to believe otherwise; but of whom candor and modesty will not suffer us to suppose less, than that 'they understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm.' Charity obliges us to hope that it is ignorance, and not dishonesty, that induces people to subscribe their assent to one thing, and to preach

another.

another. But alas! though the whole human nature has loſt all that dignity in which it was originally created, in the loſs of the divine image; how many people are there who are apt to value themſelves upon their precedency and eſteem in the world: or elſe upon their ſtation, and fortune: upon their birth and rank; or upon their wiſdom and beauty? What a mortifying conſideration, what a ſad downfall muſt it be to ſuch perſons to be told, that however noble their birth, or eminent their ſtation; however great their wealth, uncommon their learning, or ſtriking their figure—the title they all alike inherit, is that of CHILDREN OF WRATH: and the *nature* they carry about with them, aſſimilates them to the devil himſelf; and renders them as hateful and abominable in the ſight of God, as it is poſſible for the moſt offenſive thing upon earth to be to them. In this reſpect all mankind, kings and beggars, are upon a level; "there is no difference; for all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God." The phariſee and the publican, the moſt ſpecious, if unconverted moraliſt,

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and the most profane sinner, stand upon the same ground. The vilest harlot has as much *right* to the favor of God, as the most harmless character, and both *may justly* suffer eternal banishment from the presence of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh in the one as much as in the other; and "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. viii. 8. So that "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Ye *must* be born again." There is an absolute, indispensable, perishing necessity for it. The declaration is past, never to be repealed: for the word of our God must stand for ever. If therefore you have any regard for your eternal good, you will inquire, how, or in what way you can be effectually delivered out of this sinful, guilty and condemned state, in which all mankind by nature, and by practice are involved?—For surely it is wiser far to say with the blessed apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" than to be wasting time in tedious disputes

about the manner in which we were brought into this ſtate.

Now our redemption from this ſtate can only be effected by an earneſt application to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Him God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation for ſin, through faith in his blood. Rom. iii. 25. He was made ſin, by imputation, who knew no ſin, that we, by the ſame method of imputation, might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him. 2. Cor. v. 21. By him, the divine favor, which we have forfeited, is recovered: the divine image, which we have loſt, is reſtored: and a title to the kingdom of heaven, which we could never have procured, is *freely* beſtowed. "For as by one man's diſobedience many were made ſinners, ſo by the obedience of one ſhall many be made righteous. And if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive the gift of righteouſneſs ſhall reign in life by one, Jeſus Chriſt: that as ſin hath reigned unto death, even ſo might grace reign through righteouſneſs unto eternal life by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord." Rom. v. "For the wages of

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ſin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord." Rom. vi. 23.

How unſpeakable then is their happineſs who have fled for refuge to this glorious hope ſet before them! "All old things are paſſed away, and all things are become new." They are no longer the children of wrath, but the children of God by adoption and grace; being juſtified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus. They are freed from the guilt of ſin, and ſhall never come into condemnation; for there is no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus. Rom. vii. 1. they are freed from the power of ſin, for it is written, "Sin ſhall not have dominion over you, becauſe ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 14. They are freed from the puniſhment of ſin; for when the deſtroying angel ſhall go forth to execute the righteous vengeance of God upon the impenitent and the ungodly, the bleſſed Saviour, into whoſe arms they have fled, ſhall ſay of them, "Deliver them from going

down to the pit; I have found a ranſom for them."

Happy ſouls! who, that has a ſpark of ſelf-love within him, would not wiſh to be of the favored number! And have you, my beloved friends, any good hope through grace that you are among them? Is your corrupt nature a matter of continual ſorrow to you? Is that ſin which dwelleth within you a ſubject of lamentation and grief to your heart? and have you been led to him in whom alone ſalvation is to be found? If ſo, what though you are obliged to groan under the weight of this body of ſin and death—what though the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, ſo that you cannot do the things that you would—what though you feel a law within your members, warring againſt the law of your mind—yet remember, that "Ye are complete in him, who is the HEAD. Ye are accepted in the beloved:"—in him, who by one offering of himſelf once offered hath for ever perfected them that are ſanctified; having obtained eternal Redemption for them." Heb. x. Let this be your ſupport and conſolation under

under all the frailties and infirmities of a corrupt nature. And let an abiding ſenſe of what you were, and of what you now are, ever keep you where you ought ever to be, in the duſt of humility, and at the foot of the croſs, with the publican's prayer for your only plea, "God be merciful to me a ſinner."

Nor let me forget to provoke you to unfeigned and unceaſing thankfulneſs to God: in a world which lieth in wickedneſs, and among men whoſe hearts are fully ſet in them to do evil, whoſe tongues are a world of iniquity, whoſe mouths are full of curſing and bitterneſs, whoſe feet are ſwift to ſhed blood, and who have no fear of God before their eyes, bleſs God for the peace and comfort you do enjoy; and inſtead of complaining how little it is, wonder that it is any. Bleſs him for that ſyſtem of manners called politeneſs and good breeding: bleſs him for what is called among mankind a genteel education: bleſs him for human laws and civil government: all which a merciful providence hath appointed as a defence againſt the dreadful confuſion

and misery which must otherwise be derived from the total and universal corruption of the human nature.

But above all, be thankful that God hath chosen you out of the world, and that you are a living monument of God's *free*, *preventing*, *distinguishing*, and *converting* grace. For to what else can it be ascribed, that there is one creature upon earth, who loves God in sincerity and in truth? and to what other cause can we ascribe it, that of those who are converted, any persevere in the good and right way, amidst the most raging corruptions within, the most violent temptations, and all the united force of earth and hell without. How is it, that notwithstanding all this, any should endure to the end, and be saved? It is because they are kept by the mighty power of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." "And if God be for us, who can be against us? Therefore let him that glorieth, glory only in the Lord." Let the language of every heart be with gratitude and love, "By the grace of God I am what I am:" and so learn to antici-

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pate that bleſſed time, when "the top-ſtone ſhall be brought forth with ſhoutings, crying, GRACE, GRACE, unto it: when the ranſomed of the Lord ſhall return and come to Zion with ſinging; when they ſhall obtain joy and gladneſs, and ſorrow and ſighing ſhall for ever flee away." That you and I may join the favored throng, God of his abounding mercy grant for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake; to whom with the Father and the holy Spirit, be equal and everlaſting worſhip, love and praiſe. Amen.

PRAYER.

"O thou who art of too pure eyes
"to behold the leaſt iniquity, and in
"whoſe ſight the very heavens themſelves
"are not clean, how much leſs ſinful worms
"of earth; let thy pitying eye behold, let
"the bowels of thy compaſſion move with
"forgiving tenderneſs towards thy ſinful,
"guilty and helpleſs creatures. So ſinful,
"as to have loſt all the glory of the divine
"image—ſo guilty as to deſerve nothing
"but eternal baniſhment from thy pre-

"ſence,—ſo helpleſs as to be utterly un-
"able to remove thy righteous wrath, or
"to recover thy forfeited favor.

"Lord, we are vile, conceiv'd in ſin;
And born unholy, and unclean:
Sprung from the man, whoſe guilty fall
Corrupts the race, and taints us all.

Soon as we draw our infant breath,
The ſeeds of ſin grow up for death.
Thy law demands a perfect heart;
But we're defil'd in ev'ry part."

"Our miſery is indeed great; but not ſo
"great as our guilt. Help us to lament it
"with godly ſorrow, and with unfeigned
"ſelf-abhorrence. Smite theſe ſtony, rocky
"hearts, and the waters of ingenuous re-
"pentance ſhall flow. Make us deeply
"ſenſible of our wretchedneſs, and of the
"ſpiritual diſeaſe of our fallen, corrupt
"nature, that we may come and be healed
"by the great Phyſician of ſouls. And
"O may that good Samaritan, whoſe
"heart is made of tenderneſs, and whoſe
"bowels

"bowels melt with love, bind up our "wounds, and make us whole.

"We confess before thee, O God, that "we have hearts desperately wicked, and "deceitful above all things. That we carry "about within us a fountain of impu-"rity—a cage of unclean birds—a den of "thieves—a sink of sin—a mystery of ini-"quity—there is no whole part within us. "Thus cast out to the loathing of our "persons; in this forlorn condition, who "shall afford us aid? Lord, if thou wilt, "thou canst make us clean. And whither "can we flee for succor but to thee, O "Lord? thou hast the words of eternal life. "As by the offence of one, judgment is "come upon us unto condemnation, even "so, by the righteousness of one, may the "free gift come upon us unto justification "of life. As by one man's disobedience "we were constituted sinners, so, by the "obedience of the second man, the Lord from "heaven, may we be constituted righteous. "And because we have added to the guilt of "our sinful nature, the corrupt practices "and actual iniquities of our lives, where

"sin

"sin hath abounded, may grace much
"more abound; that as sin hath reigned
"unto death, even so may grace reign
"through righteousness unto eternal life,
"by Jesus Christ our Lord. Unto whom,
"for his atoning blood, and justifying
"obedience, may every believing heart as-
"cribe all the praise of his salvation for
"ever and ever." Amen.

SERMON VI.

PSALM li. 6.

BEHOLD, THOU DESIREST TRUTH IN THE INWARD PARTS.

THERE is not, it may be presumed, any one thing more offensive to God in the conduct of his creatures, or which more glaringly discovers the vileness and atheism of every human heart, than its unconcern about God's glory, and its insensibility after its offences against him. Not that mankind are unsusceptible of grief and concern, when they please to think the cause worthy of it. If by mistake, or want of prudence, they have offended one upon whom

whom their temporal prosperity depends, anguish and vexation will immediately seize the aggressor's breast, and disquiet his mind. Disappointment in worldly pursuits has been often known to produce irrecoverable despair. And the loss of an earthly object, a dear departed friend, or the wife of our bosom, which is as our own soul, has been attended with distress and grief too immoderate to admit of any relief, too lasting to allow of any intermission. But when did the sense of our sins with sorrow swell the breast, or make it heave with sighing and contrition? When did the loss of God's favor, which our offences against him incur, beget in us those tender feelings of remorse and pain, which such a bitter loss should excite? When did the discovery of our innumerable crimes provoke one expressive tear of concern, or fill our hearts with ingenuous sadness and dejection? alas! in this respect, humanity itself has no feelings, but may be compared to the very beasts that perish. The most benevolent and compassionate soul is in general as unsusceptible of these impressions, as the most barbarous and

cruel:

cruel: and the natural heart of every unconverted man is for this reason most fitly likened to a stone. For when the christian is made a new creature by the power of divine grace, that gracious promise, recorded in the prophecy of Ezekiel is, fulfilled in him, and he knows by happy experience what the great God means, when he says, "A new heart will I give you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

That mankind are not altogether destitute of some rational convictions of the necessity of being troubled for their sins, is evident from that external appearance of concern which they affect upon particular occasions. Not but that we have too many awful instances of persons who can despise those who feel any distress of this nature; who look upon them with a peculiar degree of contempt for it; and who pronounce it to be the effect of superstition, ignorance, or melancholy, rather than of grace, wisdom, or piety. And it is a question which of these two sorts of people have the advantage: whether it be not equally im-

pious

pious to attempt to impose upon God by a seeming concern that has no heartfelt reality in it, or to disavow all pretensions to any uneasiness about the matter. For "God desireth truth in the inward parts."

By this expression it is reasonable to suppose, that the penitent psalmist means either to lament before God the hypocrisy and insincerity of his heart, which were so awfully betrayed in his conduct towards Uriah the Hittite; hereby condemning himself for his horrid treachery and dissimulation: or else, to aggravate the sinfulness of that original corruption, which was so contrary to the holy nature and will of God; who requireth, not only integrity and uprightness in the outward actions, but purity in the intentions, and innocency in the heart. For the want of which he abhors himself, especially as it could not be owing to ignorance; since, as he confesses, God hath made him to know wisdom in the hidden part. Which he mentions as another additional circumstance in the guilt of his complicated offence, in that it was committed against that wisdom and knowlege, which God had

not

not only revealed to him outwardly in his word, but inwardly by divine illumination, and by the teachings of his own Spirit. "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou hast made me to know wisdom."

From the former clause of which words, it may not be foreign to their contents, nor unprofitable for us, if we deduce the following propositions for the subject of our present meditation.

I. That nothing is so detestable in the sight of God, as hypocrisy and insincerity in religious concerns.

II. That all true religion is of an internal nature. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts."

As these are matters of no trifling and indifferent nature, but such as enter into the very root of christianity; may a sense of their importance, and a conviction of their certainty, be impressed upon all our hearts by the mighty power of the Spirit of God!

I. First,

I. First, then, It is to be made appear, that hypocrisy, in religious matters, is a thing most hateful to God.

By the term hypocrisy, we are to understand, a seeming or professing to be, what in truth and reality we are not. It consists, in assuming a character which we are conscious does not belong to us, and by which we intentionally impose upon the judgment and opinion of mankind concerning us. The name is borrowed from the Greek tongue, in which it primarily signifies the profession of a stage-player; who is to express in speech, habit, and action, not his own person and manners, but his whom he undertakes to represent. And so it is; for the very essence of hypocrisy lies in apt imitation and deceit; in acting the part of a member of Christ, without any sound or saving grace.

Hypocrisy is the very ape of piety, and the mask of sin. And therefore, when our blessed Lord is addressing himself to those who excelled in the practice of it, he compares them to painted sepulchres which appear beautiful without, but within are full of rottenness and bones: even so,

says

ſays he, do ye appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocriſy and iniquity.

In the ſacred writings, this abominable ſin ſtands in direct oppoſition to what they call godly ſincerity. When a man's conduct is the true index of his heart; and when it is the unfeigned wiſh of his ſoul to *do* more than he *profeſſes*, and to *be* more than he *ſeems*; when the kindeſt charity cannot think more favorably of him than it is the ſimple prayer of his mind, and habitual ſtudy of his life to deſerve; and when the high opinion, which the pious may entertain of him, tends to humble him and make him more lowly in his own ſight.

As contraries often ſerve beſt to illuſtrate each other, we may obſerve, that whatever godly ſincerity is, hypocriſy is not. The one affects the name, while the other is ſeeking the ſubſtance of true wiſdom: and while the one is complaining for the want of that grace which it hath not, the other is longing to be admired for that which it would ſeem to have.

This temper has a variety of ways in which it discovers itself. Sometimes it is open and notorious; as in those who profess to know God, but who in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate. For, however wonderful it may appear, it is certain, that even among those who are covetous, proud, boasters, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, there is a form of godliness. They endeavor to persuade themselves that God is such an one as themselves; and a very few arguments suffice to prevail upon them to believe what they wish*. They think that they do God service by exalting one attribute to the dishonor of every other.

Bid *Mercy* triumph over—God himself:
Undeify'd by their opprobrious praise.—

No marvel therefore, if when they hear the words of God's curse, they bless themselves in their hearts, saying, "We shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our own hearts," Deut. xxix. 19. "God is merciful, and receives all penitent

* Facilè credimus, quod volumus.

sinners,

ſinners, come when they will for pardon."— Thus they deſpiſe and abuſe the riches of his forbearing and long-ſuffering goodneſs, and for God's love become his enemy; return hatred for his good-will; and continue to provoke him, *becauſe* he is ſo merciful. When hypocriſy is impudent enough to appear in this character, it is ſtiled *blaſphemy*.— "I know the blaſphemy of them who ſay they are Jews and are not, but are of the ſynagogue of Satan." Of this ſort ſad experience convinces us that there are not a few, who indeed call themſelves chriſtians, but who are "enemies to the croſs of Chriſt; whoſe God is their belly, whoſe glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things."

Sometimes it conceals itſelf under a more deluſive and ſpecious diſguiſe. As among the phariſees of old, and the ſelf-righteous in every age, who make a great ſhew in the fleſh; aſſume all the grimace of the moſt undiſſembled piety; are very obſervant of rites and ceremonies; and who, according to human judgment from outward appearance, might paſs for perſons of the ſtricteſt

virtue and morality. But the misfortune is, that under all this mask of external religion, is concealed the most fatal ignorance of human depravity, corruption, and guilt: of God, in the holiness of his nature, and the spirituality of his law; of Christ, and the necessity of his atonement and righteousness, in order to justification and salvation. Thus their *profession* and *practice* must be equally hypocritical, as they cannot, in the nature of things, have any other origin or end but *self*. In every religious act, whatever the pretence may be, self-love is the main spring, and self-seeking the last end. And I believe no person will deny that it is hypocrisy to lay claim to the title of pious, where sincere love to God is not the *motive*, nor the glory of God the *aim* of our religious actions. Well did Esaias prophesy of such hypocrites, saying, "This people draweth nigh to me with their lips, and honoreth me with their mouth, but their heart is far from me."

Of this sort of hypocrites the number is too great in every place and age. How many alas! are there, who address God in

their prayers with language expreſſive of the moſt pungent grief, and who never felt the leaſt degree of repenting ſorrow for their ſins! who confeſs before God that there is no health or ſtrength in them, but contend before men for human ſufficiency and free-will for that which is ſpiritually good: who pray for thoſe divine influences and ſuper-natural operations of the holy Spirit, which at other times they deny; and make thoſe who profeſs to experience them objects of their ridicule and contempt: and who beg of God not to take away from them the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, of which they were never poſſeſſed!

Such is the dreadful hypocriſy of every ſelf-righteous moraliſt, every deluded phariſee: who profeſſeth religion without being religious, and to be godly without having any true godlineſs. His religion is to ſuit his convenience, and to ſerve his own purpoſe, and not God's glory. In ſhort, he doeth every thing that has the ſhew of piety, beſides—worſhipping God in ſpirit and in truth.

Hypocriſy however has a diſguiſe ſtill more artful and deceiving, as in the evan-

gelical hypocrite; who has a form of knowlege in the gospel; a clear understanding of all the great truths it contains, and who can talk much and warmly in defence of the more sublime doctrines of grace; but whose heart is at the same time an intire stranger to the grace of the doctrines. He runs well in every thing but in *obeying from the heart* that form of doctrine which is delivered to him: he embraceth every thing in the truth, but the *power* of it. He can earnestly contend for the faith, but is utterly destitute of the *obedience* of faith. He is transformed into the image of a child of light, without having the light of life. He professeth to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, but in *works* denies him. He is an advocate for election, without giving any evidence of his being elected: he maintains the great truth of God's holy predestination, without any scriptural evidence of his being predestinated: and pleads for the final perseverance of the saints, without any good reason for believing himself one of them. He herds with Christ's flock, without being in his fold:

fold: he treads in his paſtures, without feeding upon them: and ſits beſide the ſtill waters of comfort, without partaking of them. He is a forgetful hearer of the word and not a doer thereof, deceiving himſelf. He frequently is preſented with a picture of his own natural face in the glaſs of the miniſtry, but he goeth away and forgetteth what manner of man he was.

Of this kind of hypocriſy the profeſſing world will furniſh us with too many awful and affecting inſtances. Whoſe obſervation does not preſent him with a view of many frequenters of the pure word of God, who ſeek Chriſt daily as thoſe who delight to know his ways: who hear the word, and anon with joy receive it, but have no root in themſelves, Mat. xiii. 20? They come into the houſe of God, and they ſit before him, and they hear his words, but they *do* them not: for with their mouth they ſhew much love, but their *heart* goeth after their covetouſneſs. And lo, the faithful miniſters of Chriſt are unto them as a very lovely ſong of one that can play well on an inſtrument: for they hear their words, but—

they *do* them not, Ezek. xxxiii. 30.—Thus they admire the manner of the preacher more than his matter; his elocution more than his divinity; and the grace of his lips, more than of the word which he is delivering to them. It is the entertainment, not the instruction which they hope to receive, that procures their attendance, or conciliates their attention. The privileges of the gospel are charming, the promises delightful, the doctrines amazing, but the precepts are *legality* and *self-righteousness*. To enforce these is to be harsh, rigid, and precise: and to reprove particular offences is to be impertinent and unpolite. No wonder if such come with unprepared hearts to the ordinances of God; without prayer, repentance, and faith; without any feeling sense of their spiritual wants, or of the immediate presence of that God whom they come thus hypocritically to worship. And Oh! if the character be thine, my fellow sinner; if I have now been taking the likeness of any before me, may an arrow of saving conviction be fastened in your

hearts,

hearts, and may an enlightened conſcience tell thee, THOU ART THE MAN!

But what if the hiſtory of human nature ſhould be able to furniſh us with a ſtill more refined ſpecies of hypocriſy—ſhall I conceal it from your view? God forbid! Come forward then, thou unhappy ſon or daughter of Adam, who haſt eyes to ſee the inſufficiency of the form of religion without the power thereof; and of the knowlege of divine truths without the experience of them; who underſtandeſt well in what the nature of true piety conſiſts, but whom the love of this preſent evil world will not ſuffer to act according to thy diſcernment: whom either the fear of man, the eſteem of creatures, an undue attention to the things of time and ſenſe, an inordinate affection for ſome earthly object, ſome luſt of the fleſh, or the pride of life, deters from giving thyſelf up *wholly* to God. You know that he will not accept a divided heart, and you will not give him *all*: you know that if you harbor *any* accurſed thing, you cannot ſtand before God; and therefore you dare not uſe ſecret prayer, becauſe you cannot enjoy any ſweet com-

communion and fellowſhip with God: your practical hypocriſy makes you dumb before him, and your conſcious inſincerity ſhuts your mouth in his preſence.

God and his miniſters have often told you, that it is in vain to attempt to unite the ſervice and love of Chriſt, with the friendſhip and love of the world. What? "know ye not that friendſhip of the world is enmity with God? and that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him?" And certainly, the man that lives in the world contrary to the light and knowlege God has given him, muſt love the world, and his heart muſt be in it, let his profeſſion or gifts be what they may. But the truth is, your *heart* is not *upright* with God. You do not *really* love Chriſt above all things. You are deſtitute of the moſt diſtinguiſhing mark of a diſciple of Chriſt, becauſe you do not forſake *all* for him; every one, and every thing that ſtands in competition with the ſupreme love of him, and with the ſalvation of your own ſoul. He is not the pearl of great price to you. You may have put your hand to the plough,

but not without looking back. You would seek Christ, but not with *all* your heart. You would follow him, but not *wholly*. You would have his blessings, but not his *cross*. You wish to reign with him, but not to *suffer* for him. You would be glad not to perish with his enemies, but you do not like to be *hated*, *despised*, and *persecuted* with his friends. You desire to be a christian with those who are such, and in their esteem, but as occasion serves, can suit yourself to the humor, the spirit, the vanity of those who would despise you, and cast out your name as evil, and separate you from their company, if you were *indeed* on the Lord's side.

You talk of the corruption of the human heart, not because you are giving all diligence to be delivered from the power of it, but as an apology for your subjection to it: and dwell upon the falls of God's people of old, to satisfy your conscience under your own. You offend the weak minds of others, and then say, that you will not be brought under the power of any: and why is your liberty to be judged of another man's conscience? The little flashes

of

of zeal and ſparks of love which ſometimes appear, ariſe not from *within* you, but are excited by ſome external cauſe: they die in their birth; they neither abide nor increaſe; and therefore they bring forth no fruit to perfection. Thy goodneſs is like the morning-cloud, and as the early dew it paſſeth away.

You know not what it is in practice to run with patience the race that is ſet before you, for you continue at one ſtay—Heb. xii. 1. nor to preſs forward, for you go backward—Phil. iii. 14. Your path is not like that of the juſt, which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day; neither do you, like the true Iſrael of God, go on from ſtrength to ſtrength; nor, like the righteous, do you hold on your way, or wax ſtronger and ſtronger. And wherefore? there is a worm at the root; thine *heart* is not upright with God; thou art not an Iſraelite indeed, in whom is no allowed guile. For as one ſaid, "It is to no purpoſe for a man to turn from ſome ſins, if he turn not from all ſins; let a man make never ſo glorious a profeſſion of religion, yet if he give himſelf liberty to live in the practice of any known

luſt,

luſt, yea, though it be but in a ſin of the tongue, James i. 26. his religion is vain, and that one luſt will ſeparate him from God for ever."

Of this ſort of hypocrites, of this kind of hypocriſy, the profeſſing world will afford us too, too many ſad examples. Look into it, and ſee how many alas! there are, who are poſſeſſed of a *Faith* without works, and which being alone, as the apoſtle tells us, is not a living but a dead faith. Who have a *Hope* that does not purify the ſubjects of it, and therefore a hope that ſhall periſh. And who have a *Love*, but it is not without diſſimulation, a love in word and tongue, but not in deed and in truth: which has no conſtraining influence upon the heart, no truly ſanctifying effect upon the life. "For with their mouth they ſhew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetouſneſs," Ezek. xxxiii.

Of each and every of theſe characters, God hath diſcovered in his bleſſed word a peculiar diſlike and abhorrence. To ſuch hypocritical mockers of God, who pretend to worſhip the moſt High, we hear him addreſſing

dreſſing himſelf in the language of the prophet, and ſaying, "To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices unto me? Bring no more vain oblations: incenſe is an abomination unto me: the new-moons and ſabbaths, the calling of aſſemblies I cannot away with: it is iniquity even the ſolemn meeting. Your new-moons, and your appointed feaſts, my ſoul hateth: they are a trouble unto me: I am weary to bear them. And when ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear. Therefore, ſaith the Lord, the Lord of hoſts, Ah, I will eaſe me of mine adverſaries, and avenge me of mine enemies," Iſa. i. And again, "He that killeth an ox, is as if he ſlew a man; he that ſacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered ſwine's blood; he that burneth incenſe, as if he bleſſed an idol." And again, "This people draweth nigh to me with their lips, and honoreth me with their mouth, but their heart is far from me; therefore in vain do they worſhip me," Iſa. lxvi. Matt. xv.

By

By all this we are taught, that nothing can compenſate for the want of ſincerity of heart in matters of a religious nature. Since the Lord himſelf calls his profeſſing people of old his enemies and adverſaries, though they offered a multitude of ſacrifices to him—though they appeared conſtantly before him in his courts—though they diligently obſerved all his inſtituted ordinances—though they prayed often, and much, and ſeemed to be in earneſt by ſtretching forth their hands unto God—yet, becauſe their *hearts* were not upright with him, all their ſervices turned to no account: they were fruitleſs and inſignificant: they were odious and offenſive: their prayers were deteſtable to that very God to whom they were addreſſed: their praiſes were an abomination: and their ſolemn meeting was iniquity. Their ſacrifices were as diſpleaſing to him as murder and idolatry: and all their external worſhip of God was vain. So certain is it, that feigned piety is the moſt aggravating ſin, and hypocriſy in religion is of all things moſt hateful to the God of heaven. Of this truth every real chriſtian is deeply and prac-

practically convinced. Nor can ſuch a conviction ever be ſeparated from a clear and affecting knowlege of the ſecond

II. Point to be proved from the words of the text: which is, That all true religion, or that in which God delighteth, and which he deſireth of all his worſhippers, is of an *internal* nature. It muſt ſpring from *within*, out of the *heart*.

The great misfortune in the conduct of mankind in general is, that they are either ſo wiſe in their own conceits that they think they are very well acquainted with the nature of religion, without giving themſelves much trouble to inquire into it: or elſe, they reſt ſatisfied with the religion of their forefathers; the notions they have imbibed with their education; the ſentiments they have ſucked in with their mother's milk; and ſo never think of making any farther inquiry about this grand concern: or elſe, they are ſo abandoned as to run the riſque with that part of their fellow creatures, who, as they chuſe to live, hope at laſt to die, and to be no more, like the brutes that

perish.

perish. And hence the scarcity of those who spend one serious moment of their lives, in inquiring what it is that *God* desires of them.

To the want of this disposition, so beautifully displayed in these words of the psalmist, "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts"—a disposition to consider what God desires, we may in some measure ascribe all the errors, heresies, and delusions, which have troubled the church, and opposed the religion of the Bible in every age. To this it is owing that the Deists have dared to set up *human reason*, falsly so called, in the place of *divine revelation*; and its light, in opposition to that of spiritual illumination. They call us irrational, mad, and enthusiastic, for professing to know the will of God from the sacred oracles of inspiration; and they are *blind* enough to think themselves less mad, less irrational, and enthusiastic, for pretending to know his mind and will without any revelation of it. Let every rational person pity their ignorance, and pray for their conversion: for after all, it will appear at last, I fear, that the fault was not so

much in the *weakneſs* of their *heads*, as in the *wickedneſs* of their *hearts*.

From the ſame unhappy ſource ariſes what is called Phariſaiſm, or Self-righteouſneſs. Would the advocates for human merit, who plead for the ſufficiency of good works as an entire or partial recommendation to the favor of God, really conſider what God in his own nature *muſt*, and in his word actually *does* deſire of his creatures; they would no longer ſubſtitute the poor and imperfect righteouſneſs of the creature, in the place of the imputed righteouſneſs of the Saviour: the loftineſs of man would then be bowed down, and the haughtineſs of men laid low; and THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS *alone* would be exalted. But they err, not knowing the ſcriptures, the holineſs of God, or the ſpirituality of his law. "They being ignorant of God's righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, have not ſubmitted themſelves to the righteouſneſs of God: for Chriſt is the end f the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth," Rom. x.

But

But are these the only persons who suffer in their eternal interests by a want of simple and principal attention to what God desires of his faithful people and true worshippers? By no means. Witness those who pay more regard to the preacher than to his master; to the servant than to his message; to the manner than to the matter; and to him who preaches than to what is preached: as if the Spirit of God were confined in all its fulness to one object; and as if truth were truth no longer than while it is delivered by one mouth. Hence the tribe of dependents on human teaching more than on divine: hence bigotry and party-spirit: and hence greater regard paid to the dogmas of a poor, frail, fallible creature, than to the pure declarations of sacred writ.

We find this spirit most severely reproved by an apostle in one of his epistles to the church at Corinth, as the dreadful cause of their contentions. "One saith, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; and a third, I of Cephas." The gospel was not worth hearing, unless delivered by St. Paul to one professor: to another it was dry, un-

leſs preached by the eloquent Apollos: and another could not ſit under the preaching of any but Cephas, and therefore he was reſolved to follow him whitherſoever he went. But was this any diſtinguiſhing mark of their wiſdom, grace, or zeal? let the great apoſtle himſelf furniſh us with a reply to this queſtion. "Whereas there is among you envying, and ſtrife, and diviſions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one ſaith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? So then neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increaſe," 1 Cor. iii.

To this unhappy temper is attributed all that fatal ſelf-deceit and thoſe horrible deluſions among the profeſſing people of God in old time. They conſulted the falſe prophets, and inquired of them more than of the Lord. They were pleaſed with their flatteries; they prophesied falſly, and the people loved to have it ſo. One built a wall, and another daubed it with untempered mortar. They ſaid unto them, prophesy

phesy not unto us right things, prophesy smooth things. Hence they perished in their own deceivings. And hence that violent opposition made by the Jews against the blessed Jesus; because they received for doctrines the commandments of men, and so made the word of God of none effect. Such were the evil consequences arising from an undue attention to creatures in religious concerns.

The true christian is taught to see this, and to be practically affected with it; and therefore he calls no man master upon earth, nor will he receive divine truth as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God, which effectually worketh in them who believe *. And it is certain, that so long as the children of Israel retained any thing like true religion amongst them, they were remarkable for being under the influence of this spirit. In all their proceedings they went to inquire at the mouth of the Lord. Like Job, their language was, "What we know not, teach thou us:" or, like Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?"

* Amicus Socrates; amicus Plato; sed magis amica VERITAS. I love Socrates; and I love Plato; but I love TRUTH better than either of them.

Now it is impoſſible for a man to be really poſſeſſed of this ſpirit of inquiry, concerning what God deſires of and expects from his creatures, and not to be convinced that he deſireth truth in the inward parts: that is, godly ſincerity; to be inwardly, what we ſeem outwardly: to profeſs no more than we really mean: and to have the ſpring of every action ariſing from within, out of the heart. Like him of whom we read in the oracles of God, who was called an Iſraelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

That this is what God deſires, cannot be diſputed after the recital of the following paſſages of ſcripture. "My ſon, ſays the great God, give me thine *heart*:" intimating thereby, that no other gift is worth his reception without this; or elſe, that God has all he requires in this. And indeed, whitherſoever the heart goes, all our affections will follow: and where the treaſure is, there will the heart be alſo. A man's religion therefore is fundamentally defective, if it be not ſeated here: as we find in the hiſtory of the children of Iſrael, all whoſe ingratitude, murmurings, rebellions,

lions, and apoſtaſies from God, reſulted from this ſingle circumſtance, *their hearts were not upright before him.* So that when our Lord is drawing the character of the *true Iſrael* of God, in his conference with the woman of Samaria, he tel's her, that "the hour is coming in the which the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth. God is a Spirit: and they who worſhip him *muſt* worſhip him in *ſpirit* and in *truth.*" Aſſuring her, that place or manner would avail nothing, if there were only the *form* of godlineſs, without the *power* thereof: and adding moreover, that true grace did not conſiſt in external modes and circumſtances, but that it was *within* the ſoul, like a well of water ſpringing up unto everlaſting life.

For this reaſon what God requires of his own children, as a thing which cannot be diſpenſed with, he hath promiſed to give them. Seeing he deſires truth in the inward parts, he promiſes to work an inward change in them. "A new *heart* alſo will I give you, and a new *Spirit* will I put *within* you; and I will take away the ſtony heart out of

your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; that is, a soft, tender, and affectionate heart—and I will put my Spirit *within* you, and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God," Ezek. xxxvi. And this covenant-promise is made no doubt on purpose to teach us, that the very essence of pure religion lies in the *internal* frame of the soul. How indeed can it be otherwise, when every constituent part of it does so? what every *part* of a thing is as to its nature or kind, the *whole* must be. But every part of the religion of Christ is of an internal and spiritual nature. With regard to that *Faith*, of which the scriptures assert that whosoever is a partaker of it shall be saved, we are informed, that "with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness:" which is as much as to say, that saving faith is wrought not only in the understanding, but in the heart by the Spirit of God; and that it is not so much an act of the understanding, as of the heart: and Christ is said to dwell in the *heart* by faith.

So again; No one who has a grain of sense or reason can imagine, that that *Repentance*,

pentance, without which we muſt periſh, can conſiſt in thoſe outward penances, thoſe whippings and ſcourgings, and bodily mortifications, which the church of Rome enjoins its deluded votaries. No. It ariſes from a broken *heart* and a contrite *ſpirit*: from a godly ſorrow for ſin: and if diſcovered in any outward expreſſions, it is out of the abundance of the *heart* the mouth ſpeaketh.

In the chriſtian religion, *Love* is an eſſential ingredient; and in every devout exerciſe of it, this is to be the *primum mobile*, the leading motive. It is not urged, nor can it ever be practiſed, upon the beggarly principles of ſlaviſh fear and terror. For, "he that loveth not, knoweth not God: whereas, he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him: and this is the firſt and great commandment, thou ſhalt *love* the Lord thy God." But is there a creature upon earth ſo abſurd as to ſuppoſe, that love is ſeated any where but in the heart; when the very definition of its nature is, that it is an affection of the heart going out towards any beloved object? it is

love

love that ſits like a pilot at the helm, and ſteers all the paſſions and affections of the ſoul as it pleaſeth. And when itſelf is attracted by the beauty, glory, and excellency, of the triune God, then religion ſtands upon its right baſis, and there is truth in the inward parts.

With reſpect to that holineſs without which it is agreed on all hands that none ſhall ſee the face of God to their eternal joy, it does not deſerve the name, but as it affects the *inward man*. Even prayer is no prayer, unleſs it be with the *ſpirit*, as well as with the underſtanding; neither is praiſe any praiſe in the ſight of God. Both the one and the other are the language of hypocriſy, and the perſon who uſes them is an hypocritical mocker of God, if his heart do not in ſome good degree harmonize with his lips. So certain is it, that God deſireth truth in the inward parts; and that as he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumciſion which is outward in the fleſh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumciſion is that of the ſpirit —ſo, he is not a chriſtian, who is one outwardly,

wardly, neither is that the true baptiſm which is outward in the fleſh: but he is a chriſtian, who is one inwardly; and baptiſm is that of the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe praiſe is not of men, but of God; who trieth the hearts, and ſearcheth the reins of the children of men.

APPLICATION.

Use 1. What an awful alarm ſhould the doctrine before us ſound in the ear of every inſincere and hypocritical profeſſor of religion! When the great God appears in the aſſemblies of his worſhippers here upon earth, and utters his glorious voice among them, ſaying, I THE LORD, SEARCH THE HEART! methinks the moſt ſerious worſhipper ſhould tremble at the declaration, and the diſſembling hypocrite ſhould not preſume to continue in his preſence. For the only difference between the moſt profane wretch, who dares to affront God to his face, and bid heaven itſelf defiance, and the pious hypocrite, is, that the one glories in his ſhame, and the other attempts

to conceal it: and it ſhould ſeem that of the two, the latter is the more deteſtable character in the ſight of him, whoſe judgment is always according to truth.

If ſo, what ſhall I ſay to the *rational* hypocrite, who oppoſes his reaſon to revelation; his underſtanding to faith; and his natural free-will, to the ſupernatural operations of divine grace? who thinks his own ſpirit a guide ſuperior to the Spirit of God; and his own judgment a more excellent rule of right, than the word of God? whoſe pride is the fruit of his ignorance, and whoſe ignorance is nouriſhed by his pride? whoſe will is his law; whoſe reaſon is his god; and whoſe boaſted morality not ſeldom falls ſhort of common honeſty? what ſhall I ſay to ſuch an hypocrite? Perhaps thou art more ſubtle than any other beaſt of the field; but as long as this is thy character, thou haſt abundant cauſe to fear that thou wilt be curſed above them too. For if they are curſed who do not continue in all the words that are written in the book of the law to *do* them; what is likely to be the portion of ſuch as not only practically neglect them,

them, but avowedly despise them?—God shall appoint them their portion with the hypocrites and unbelievers.

What shall I say to the *moral* hypocrite, in whom education supplies the place of divine illumination, and human sufficiency that of spiritual sanctification: who substitutes nature in the room of grace; fancy for faith; imagination for revelation; and inherent for imputed righteousness: who chuses rather to die of the disease of natural corruption, than to apply for a cure to the great Physician of souls: who feels too much self-love to find any place in his heart for Christ; and who is too well satisfied with his own goodness, to see the perishing necessity of being interested in the Redeemer: who wraps himself up in his pretended *virtue*, *piety*, and *morality*, and can look with contempt on those who wish to be under the protection of a better righteousness than their own: who can cross out the first table of the ten commands, and then have vanity enough to write at the bottom of the second, "All these have I kept from my youth:" who think it is a

very

very immaterial thing what they believe, ſo long as they pay every body their own, and do as they would be done by, as they call it: who diſregard both the principles, means, and end of actions, and conclude, that God is bound to paſs the ſame partial judgment upon them, as they themſelves do? But God judgeth not according to the outward appearance; neither is he to be deceived by the vain ſhadows of pretended piety. He knows how to diſtinguiſh the ſplendid ſins of the hypocritical moraliſt, from the ſpiritual acts of a real chriſtian. He can diſcern *realities* from *appearances*; a *painted ſepulchre* from an *honeſt heart*; and him who ſerveth *himſelf*, from him who ſerveth *God*.

Beware then, thou deluded moral hypocrite, who art raiſing morality upon the ruins of divinity, and exalting thy own goodneſs, while thou art treading under foot the blood and righteouſneſs of the dear Redeemer—beware leſt death ſurprize thee and judgment find thee in this ſtate, for then the ſword of God's vindictive juſtice will be ſheathed in thine heart, never to be taken out again through all eternity.

What

What ſhall I ſay to the *worldly* hypocrite, who profeſſes the true religion of Chriſt without embracing it: the thorny-ground hearer, who hears the word, but loves the world; in whom the cares of this world, and the deceitfulneſs of riches, and the luſt of other things entering in, choak the word and it becometh unfruitful; who ſeeketh firſt the world and then the kingdom of God, and that not within him, but without him; having no other idea of the kingdom of God, but what conſiſts in being ſaved from hell? His grand aim is to get money, which he purſues, notwithſtanding all the temptations and ſnares of the devil, of which God has forewarned him, in the way to it. He little regards going beyond the word of the Lord to do leſs or more, ſo that he can but accompliſh his worldly deſigns.

And is this the caſe with any to whom I am now addreſſing myſelf? if it be—what if God ſhould require thy ſoul of thee this night? what if like Dives, you ſhould be lifting up your eyes in the torments of the damned before to-morrow's ſun? Be afraid, my fellow-ſinner, leſt an offended God ſhould cut

thee

thee off in a moment, and in a moment consign thy immortal soul to endless woe; for they who are *earthly-minded* are as really enemies to the cross of Christ, and their end will as surely be destruction, as the end of those whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame. Phil. iii.

What shall I say to the *religious* hypocrite, who seems to belong to Christ, without having Christ formed in him; and who has a name to live, but is dead: who professeth to have the faith of Abraham, without walking in the steps of that father of the faithful: who *knoweth* what is good, but *doeth* it not: who, though he may forsake some evil ways, yet doth not hate *every* false way; and though he may respect some, yet hath not respect to *all* God's commandments: who will plead prudence, as an excuse for lukewarmness; and for fear of giving offence and disgust to his fellow-worms, will offend God by a temporising conformity to the world, and by not confessing Christ before men? This is the hypocrite who can accommodate the world and *his* religion to each other—can hear the

word

word of God continually without profiting by it—can read it without inwardly digesting it—who can pray without praying; having the gift without the grace of prayer: in short, who believes without faith; who hopes without ground; who rejoices, but not in the Lord; who has a zeal, but not according to knowlege; and a sort of wisdom which is not from above, because it is neither pure, nor full of good fruits, it is not without partiality nor without hypocrisy.

How shall I direct myself to hypocrites of this class? alas! alas! Who can tell what confusion, and what terror will possess their souls when they shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, where every character shall be displayed in its true colors; where every hypocrite must unmask; and where the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed: for there is nothing secret that shall not then be revealed, nor any thing hidden that shall not be made known. Then, "the sinners in *Zion* will be afraid, fearfulness will surprize the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring

fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14.

O that in the view of these alarming considerations, every one of us may be led to great searchings of heart; that we may be driven out of every strong-hold of hypocrisy; that the power of divine grace may sweep away every refuge of lies, and make us all among the happy number of those "who are of the true circumcision; who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh!" Phil. iii. 3.

Use 2. Let me not however forget, that while I am obliged to warn the hypocrite of every class, it is equally my duty to endeavor to comfort the feeble-minded, and to support the weak. And indeed it usually happens, that they who have least self-deceit and most godly sincerity, will be most suspicious and fearful of the contrary.

The pious man, who is honest to his own heart, and much acquainted with himself and with the inward operations of his mind, will detect too much hypocrisy and insin-

insincerity, many corrupt principles and sinful ends, mixing themselves with his best performances. He knows, that it is not the love of God that always animates him in his religious duties, nor does the glory of God in every thing direct his conduct. And because he so sincerely wishes it were otherwise with him, that he could perfectly love God and worthily magnify his holy name, therefore he is sometimes afraid that he is no better than a hypocrite.

But it may be observed for the consolation of such, that he who is really afraid of being a hypocrite, is in no danger of being one. Godly jealousy implies true self-knowlege, and is wrought in the heart by the special grace of the holy Spirit: they who feel their hypocrisy, lament it, and mourn over it, are not under the power of self-deceit; they are alive unto God: and as it is their unfeigned desire and prayer to God, that they may serve him in righteousness and true holiness, they are, in the estimation of the scripture itself, "Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile."

For ſincerity of heart, or truth in the inward parts, does not mean ſinleſs perfection. "If we ſay that we have no ſin, the truth is not in us, and we deceive ourſelves." But it means an habitual freedom from all allowed hypocriſy, and a real deſire, ſtudy, and endeavor, to approve ourſelves before God; to *believe*, to *be*, and to *do* in all reſpects what he would have us; and to give up ourſelves wholly to him, to be ordered by his word, to be ruled by his will, and to be directed by his Spirit. Where this is, there I ſhould humbly ſuppoſe is that temper and diſpoſition of ſoul which God requires of his faithful people. But true grace can never conſiſt with allowed guile or ſecret hypocriſy. And though the Lord can paſs over, and in the multitude of his tender mercies forgive, the many frailties, infirmities, and ſins of his ſincere worſhippers, yet they are the ſubject of great and continual grief to them: and will often force them, out of love to God and hatred to ſin, to long for that bleſſed time when this corruptible ſhall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, when

when ſorrow and ſighing ſhall for ever flee away.

Use 3. I have only now a ſhort word of exhortation for thoſe who profeſs to be the people of the Lord, and who call themſelves chriſtians. What doth the Lord thy God require of thee? "Truth in the inward parts:" that your tongues ſhould expreſs the feelings of your hearts, and that you ſhould worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth. Without this, all your profeſſion is vain, yea, and all your practice too: incenſe is an abomination to God, and every duty you perform hateful and offenſive.

Beware, therefore, of the leaven of the phariſees, which is hypocriſy. Remember always that the man is bleſſed, and he alone, "whoſe iniquities are forgiven, whoſe ſins are covered, and in whoſe ſpirit there is no guile," Pſalm xxxii. 1, 2. May it be the unceaſing prayer of every one of your hearts for yourſelves, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way ever-

lasting," Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. And may I too be enabled to bow my knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowlege, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Eph. iii. 14.

PRAYER.

"O thou, whose all-seeing eye searcheth "the hearts, and trieth the reins of the "children of men, and from whom no se-"crets are hid, and to whom no character is

"so

"so hateful as that of the hypocrite, no "sin so offensive as hypocrisy; deliver us, "we beseech thee, from all self-deceit, and "self-delusion. Make us of the blessed "number of those whom thou seekest to "worship thee, worshippers of God in spi-"rit and in truth. And whenever we come "into the assemblies of thy people, may it "be to inquire the will of the Lord con-"cerning us, to know what he would have "us to do, what he desires of us, and what "he expects us to be.

"We are often afraid, O God, that our "repentance is nothing but remorse; our "faith no better than fancy; and that we "are walking in that way which seemeth "right, but the end of which is death. If "in any thing we be deceived, O Lord, "undeceive us. Suffer us not to err from "thy paths, nor to mistake in the things "which belong to our eternal peace: leave "us not destitute of the precious faith of "thine elect, by which the Saviour is not "only revealed *to* us, but *in* us, as the "hope of glory: let us not be satisfied with "any degree or kind of sorrow, short of

" that which worketh repentance unto sal-
" vation. May we be taught to hate all
" sin, as sin, for its sinfulness, and because
" of its opposition to thy pure and holy na-
" ture: may we dread its pollution more
" than its punishment; and flee from it, as
" from hell itself. And may we love that
" holiness which is the delight of God, and
" of all his saints and faithful in Christ
" Jesus: abhorring that which is evil, and
" cleaving to that which is good; rejoicing
" in the testimony of a good conscience,
" that in simplicity and godly sincerity,
" not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace
" of God, we have had our conversation in
" this world. O may our hearts be upright
" with the Lord: may we be wholly on the
" Lord's side: having respect to all his
" commandments, and hating every false
" way, without partiality and without hy-
" pocrisy. Being joined to the Lord by his
" own Spirit, may we be partakers of a di-
" vine nature, and have truth in the inward
" parts. Being cut off from the old stock,
" and engrafted into Christ, living branches
" in him the living vine, may we bring
" forth

"forth fruit unto God; even fruit that shall "increase and abound: so that after having "brought forth fruit unto perfection while "in thy vineyard below, we may at length "be transplanted into that garden of the "Lord, where one eternal spring for ever "reigns; and where the redeemed of the "Lord shall drink of the fruit of the vine "in the kingdom of their Father, in the "mansions of bliss, throughout eternal "ages." Amen and Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

PSALM li. 6.

IN THE HIDDEN PART THOU HAST MADE ME TO KNOW WISDOM*.

THERE is, it is commonly remarked, implanted in the breast of every man a natural thirst after knowlege of some kind. The sad misfortune is, that the soul's activity in this respect is so unhappily, and so generally exercised upon objects and sub-

* The author has taken the liberty to use that translation which the original Hebrew will admit—which several learned commentators have approved—and which seems most consistent with the design and spirit of the psalm.

jects

jects of an inferior ſort, to the neglect of thoſe of the higheſt concern. Human nature is totally fallen and corrupt: and this is the true reaſon why all its faculties and nobleſt powers are proſtituted to the meaneſt ſervices, and that it is leaſt affected with things of the utmoſt importance.

The mind of man however will be employed; and, in general, upon what is earthly, ſenſual, or deviliſh. The wiſdom of the creature, conſidered in its fallen ſtate, can ſoar no higher. Hence that deplorable inattention to ſpiritual wiſdom, or the knowlege of God, his nature, perfection, will and law: and hence that fatal ignorance of every thing elſe which immediately relates to the everlaſting good of an immortal ſpirit.

It was however the peculiar happineſs of the royal penitent, of whoſe repentance we have ſo ſtriking a diſplay in the pſalm before us, to be delivered from the miſery of ſuch a ſtate. He knew that there was no refuge for a diſtreſſed ſoul but in God, and therefore his application was made to him. He knew that he could not lay any

juſt

juſt claim to relief on account of any worthineſs in himſelf, and therefore he ſues for unmerited *mercy*. He knew that there was no mercy with God for a ſinner, but what muſt flow through the channel of the Redeemer's blood; and therefore he puts up his prayer to God with an eye to that. Like a ſincere penitent he acknowleges his crime, which he is here lamenting, in all its vileneſs, baſeneſs, and impurity: and under a deep conviction that God was the object chiefly offended and diſhonored by it, he lies down in the duſt of humility and confuſion before him: abhorring himſelf for the want of that inward ſincerity and truth which God deſires: and confeſſing that it was not through ignorance, but againſt ſpiritual light and knowlege he had committed this abominable tranſgreſſion. For, "in the hidden part thou haſt made me to know wiſdom." Hereby moſt ingenuouſly diſcovering another aggravation of his ſin, in that it was perpetrated againſt the knowlege which God had not only revealed to him outwardly in his word, but alſo inwardly,

or

or as the apostle Peter has it, "in the hidden man of the heart, by his spirit."

The few words I have now chosen by way of text, as they have been thus opened to you, may afford us an opportunity of illustrating the following articles of christian truth.

I. The knowlege of divine things is a very important part of true religion.

II. The saving knowlege of divine things is a gift of God, and the work of his *special* grace upon the minds of his people.

III. The sins of those who are possessed of this inestimable blessing, have a peculiar degree of heinousness in them, and must be most offensive to God.

While I am speaking upon these points,

O thou, whose power o'er moving worlds presides,
Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides,
On darkling man in pure effulgence shine,
And cheer the clouded mind with light divine.

I. First,

I. First, then, let us attempt to shew that the knowlege of divine things is an essential part of true religion.

We have been told indeed by a neighbouring church, that *Ignorance is the mother of devotion*: it should have been added, of *their* devotion. For I believe no one who is possessed of any tolerable share of common sense and reason, unless he can first be prevailed upon to *deny himself* the use of either, would ever join in their foolish, impious, and ridiculous ceremonies. It is no proof of their *ignorance*, though it is of the *art* of the deluding priests of that idolatrous church, to contrive to put out the *eyes* of their deluded votaries, and then to lead them by the *nose*.

But while we pity and mourn over their misfortunes, let us take heed that we follow not their example. There have ever been too many, who sincerely disavow the superstitions of popery, and yet have run into the greatest extravagancies of wildness and enthusiasm. Where either of these take place, though the effects may differ in their appearances, the cause is the same: and both super-

ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm reſult from an ignorance of the neceſſity of a clear and ſound underſtanding of the things of God. The neceſſity of which is demonſtrable from the whole hiſtory of the world, as handed down to us by the moſt authentic records, and confirmed by the repeated and infallible teſtimonies of ſacred writ.

If we go back ſo far as the firſt ages of the world, we ſhall be taught that there is an almoſt indiſſoluble connection in the nature of things between *ſin* and *ignorance*. An inſtance of which we have in our firſt father Adam. For it is obſervable, that the very moment ſin entered into his heart, ignorance of God followed upon it. He who before cannot be ſuppoſed with any propriety to have been unacquainted with the natural perfections of his creator and God, thought now, blindly enough, to hide himſelf from his preſence. So fooliſh was he and ignorant †.

And

† Some have doubted whether or no the intellectual powers of Adam at his firſt creation were ſuperior to those of an in ant:

And indeed this may ſerve as an awful ſpecimen of the character of human nature in this reſpect ever ſince. What the prophet ſays in Iſa. 60. 2. is as evident from fact, as it is from revelation, that, "darkneſs hath covered the earth, and groſs darkneſs the people;" inſomuch that, as the apoſtle after him declares, "There is none that underſtandeth."

The proud heart of man is not willing to entertain ſuch an opinion of its own blindneſs and ignorance. The word of God ſhall rather be denied, than ſuch a mortifying truth as this be believed. And that word *muſt* be denied by thoſe who will not believe this truth. For if we conſult the

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infant: and whether his original knowlege of divine things were greater than that of a new-born child. But, as it hath been judiciouſly remarked by a late writer, this we may ſay with aſſurance, that he had as much ſpiritual wiſdom, as the duty of his ſtation required: for it is to be obſerved, that the good and righteous Creator never lays any commands upon his creatures, until he has put them into ſuch circumſtances that every duty ariſes naturally out of them: and therefore we muſt ſuppoſe the knowlege of God and of his law was clearly written upon the heart of our firſt parent.

account it gives us of those who had the finest parts, the most sublime, abstracted and philosophic genius in the heathen world, we shall be informed, that 'professing themselves wise, they became fools: and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things‡.' And lest we should sup-

‡ It is astonishing, says the author of the antient history, when speaking of the manners and customs of the Egyptians, to see a nation which boasted its superiority above all others with regard to wisdom and learning, blindly abandoning itself to the grossest and most ridiculous superstitions. Indeed, to read of animals and vile insects, honored with religious worship, and placed in temples: to hear that leeks and onions were acknowleged as deities, were invoked in cases of necessity, and depended upon for succor and protection; are extravagancies which we, at this distance of time, can scarce believe; and yet they have the evidence of all antiquity. 'You enter, says Lucian, into a magnificent temple, every part of which glitters with gold and silver. You there look attentively for a god, and are cheated with a stork, an ape, or a cat: a just emblem, adds that author, of too many palaces, the masters of which are far from being the brightest ornaments of them.'

Nor was the idolatry and superstition of the Grecians less than that of the Egyptians, of whom history assures us, that almost

suppose that this was an invincible ignorance, arising from any natural defect, and not from moral depravity, we are told, that 'they were without excuse; because that which may be known of God was manifest in them: for God had shewed it unto them: for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead: but they became vain in their imaginations, and their *foolish heart* was darkened:

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almost every city had different gods, and different modes of worship: that they were not content to worship the antient deities, but were daily consecrating new ones: that in Homer's time, the number of their gods amounted to thirty thousand. And it was from the fear that the Athenians had of omitting the honor due to any, that we are told they even erected altars to the *unknown gods*: to which circumstance of their horrid superstition the apostle Paul refers in the Acts. What an idea they must have entertained of their gods, we may learn from the nature of their feasts kept in honor of them; in which nothing was seen but dancing, drunkenness, and debauchery, with every other sort of the most abominable licentiousness. And this among an entire people, reputed the wisest of all Greece: for, Plato says in direct terms, that he had seen the whole city of Athens drunk at once.

they did not *like* to retain God in their knowlege; but changed the truth of God into a lye, and worſhipped and ſerved the creature more than the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever.' Rom. i.

Nor was this the caſe with the heathen, more than with the Jewiſh world; as we find from that impartial record in the prophecy of Iſaiah: who aſſures us, that although they had every external advantage, as a nation, to inſtruct them in the knowlege of God and of his worſhip, they *formed* a god, and bowed to an idol that was profitable for nothing: that they hewed them down cedars, and took the cypreſs or the oak, with part of which they kindled a fire and warmed themſelves, and roaſted roaſt; and the reſidue thereof they made after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, that it might remain in the houſe; yea, they fell down unto it, and worſhipped it, and prayed unto it, ſaying, "Deliver me, for thou art my god." They have not *known* nor *underſtood*, for none conſidered in his heart, neither was there *knowlege* or *underſtanding* to ſay, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea alſo I have baked

baked bread upon the coals thereof: I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?"

Such is the character which the sacred scriptures have drawn even of those to whom the oracles of God were committed: witness the golden calf which Aaron made, and their repeated idolatry after the great light they enjoyed in the times of Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, and the prophets; under whom they still persisted in the grossest delusions, notwithstanding the best outward means of instruction.

Had it been true that ignorance is the mother of devotion, or that it was possible to offer any acceptable worship to God without *right conceptions* of him, the necessity of divine knowlege, which is nothing but the comprehension of truth, or of things as they really are, had not appeared so indispensable: but it is otherwise; for the complaints brought against the professing people of God, were often uttered with immediate reference to their *blindness* and *ignorance*. "My people are destroyed for lack of

knowlege, saith the Lord. They will not be *learned* nor *understand*." "There is no truth nor *knowlege* of God in the land—therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no *knowlege*." Not as if we were to imagine that they were left destitute of the means of knowlege; but that when they had them, they rather abused than enjoyed them: they refused instruction, closing their eyes, that they might not see; shutting their ears that they might not hear; and hardening their hearts against it. They loved darkness rather than light, and hated the knowlege of the Lord: and therefore they killed the prophets, and stoned them who were sent unto them.

Now all this was too evident a proof of their having been strangers to that knowlege of God and of divine things, which is called saving knowlege; and which consists in such a view and apprehension of spiritual truths as not only informs the understanding, but also affects the heart, and influences the life: it supposes a clear sight of their beauty and excellency; a deep conviction of their weight and importance; and an abiding, not to say, increasing effect

upon

upon the tempers and dispositions of the soul: and so nearly are these things united in the experience of every real christian, so essential are they to the nature of *saving knowlege*, that each and every of them distinctly, are frequently put for the thing itself; and where either of them is wanting, the defect is material.

Divine knowlege, or the right understanding of divine things, may be very properly stiled the seed of all other graces of the Spirit. As in the natural man the will and affections are usually led by the understanding, and a man generally loves and hates according to his immediate apprehension of things; so it is in the spiritual or renewed man. And indeed our faith without this would be a mere fancy, a notion; a belief of we know not what, and we know not why. Our love must be a blind affection; our zeal madness, if not according to knowlege; and our repentance a childish grief, an uneasy concern about nothing at all. And therefore the sacred scriptures were given by the inspiration of God, that they might be profitable for *doctrine*, for conviction, for

correction, and for *instruction* in righteousness; that the man of God may be throughly furnished with every good work. For the same purpose are the ministers of the churches appointed, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, that we henceforth be no more tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

Through this medium of divine knowlege it is, that grace and peace are multiplied to the soul: and all things pertaining to life and godliness flow from it, like so many streams from a fountain. It is the main-spring of all scriptural holiness of heart and life: and therefore when the apostle is urging the professing christians at Ephesus to a conduct suitable to their profession, it is upon the presumption of their having been taught the truth as it is in Jesus: "this, I say *therefore*, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind; having the *understanding darkened*, being alienated from the life of God through the *ignorance* that is in them, because of the blind-

blindneſs of their hearts." And to ſhew us how fully convinced he was of the excellency and neceſſity of this divine knowlege, he mentions it as a proof of his affection for the believers at Coloſſe, that, "ſince the day he heard of their knowing the grace of God in truth, he had not ceaſed to pray for them, that they might be filled with the knowlege of the will of God in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding: why? that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, and increaſing in the knowlege of God."

But in order to diſcover in one point of view the great and eſſential part ſuch a knowlege of divine things bears in true religion, and therefore in true happineſs; let us advert to a ſingle declaration uttered by the mouth of one, who ſpake as never man ſpake: "This is life eternal to *know* thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent." John xvii. 3. Upon this baſis all the bleſſedneſs of an immortal ſpirit ſtands: here centers all its preſent and its everlaſting peace.

Now can any creature in the proper exerciſe of his reaſon be ſo abſurd as to ſuppoſe, that the

the knowlege here ſpoken of is not of a particular *kind?* or, that it reſts in a dry *ſpeculative* conception of what God is, as a being of infinite glory, excellency, and perfection? or of what Chriſt was, in his perſon, works, and offices, as commiſſioned from heaven to glorify his Father upon earth, and to bring many of the fallen ſeed of Adam to glory? If ſo, let me aſſure you that the ſuppoſition is not only irrational and unſcriptural, but dangerous and fatal §. For there is

§ All light is from God, the light of ſenſe and the ſight of reaſon; and therefore he is called, *the Father of lights*. But the light of grace is after a peculiar manner his, being a light above the reach of nature, infuſed into the ſoul in a ſupernatural way: The light of the elect world, where God ſpecially and graciouſly reſides. Natural men may know very much in natural things, and it may be of ſupernatural things after a natural manner. They may be able to diſcourſe of God, and of his Son Chriſt, and the myſtery of redemption, and yet want this *peculiar* light, by which Chriſt is known to beſievers; they may ſpeak of him; but it is in the dark; they ſee him not, and therefore they love him not; the light they have is as the light of ſome things that ſhine only in the night, a cold glow-worm light that hath no heat with it at all.

ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

no

no doubt but that the angels who are reserved in everlasting chains of darkness, are well acquainted with the nature and glory of the first and second person in the ever blessed Trinity; but their knowlege is not of that *sort* as to deliver them from their present misery, or to bring them to eternal life. They are not possessed of that knowlege which is here called *wisdom in the hidden parts*: and which is the life and happiness of its possessor.

This is that wisdom of which Solomon speaks so highly, and upon whose worth he dwells with such unspeakable delight. And no marvel, as it is the saving knowlege of the FIRST CAUSE, THE CHIEF GOOD, and THE LAST END of all things. Therefore, says he, "get wisdom; for wisdom is the principal thing. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand

riches

riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them who lay hold of her, and happy is every one that retaineth her."

It is a wisdom within the soul, which affects the *heart* with a sense of those things, in the knowlege of which this wisdom consists, suitably to their different natures: If it respect *sin*, then the emotions of grief, hatred and abhorrence, are excited from a view of its vileness and deformity: if the great *God*, then, fear or love, hope or distress arise in the mind, according as the mind is fixed upon his infinite holiness or grace, his justice or his loving-kindness and tender mercies: if it regard the *divine law*, its exceeding perfection and unchanging purity produce self-despair, and self-condemnation: if *Christ*, a sight of his dying, redeeming, and justifying love, renders him precious; revives the drooping heart, with some chearing rays of comfort; and kindles in the soul a flame of heavenly affection to him, who is able and willing to save to the uttermost: if the *word of God*, the feelings

of

of ſuch as know wiſdom in the hidden man of the heart, are finely expreſſed in the pſalmiſt's ſtile, " it is dearer to them than thouſands of gold and ſilver, ſweeter alſo than honey, or the honey-comb:" if it reſpect thoſe who worſhip the Lord in ſincerity and truth, the ſenſation ariſing in the ſoul from a knowlege of them, is deſcribed in the following language, " All my *delight* is in the ſaints that are upon the earth, and among ſuch as excel in virtue:" and if the *precepts of God* are the object of immediate conſideration, they who are renewed in the ſaving knowlege of divine things, will be ready to cry out, " O that my ways were made ſo direct, that I might keep thy ſtatutes! Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God."

Such are the operations of the mind of a *wiſe man* in the ſcripture-ſenſe of the phraſe, and ſuch the fruits and effects of *wiſdom in the hidden parts*. It may be aſked, " Whence then cometh wiſdom, and where is the place of underſtanding like this?"—" Man knoweth not the price thereof: neither is it

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to be found in the land of the living. The depth ſaith, it is not in me; and the ſea ſaith, it is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither ſhall ſilver be weighed for the price thereof. No mention ſhall be made of coral, or of pearl; for the price of wiſdom is above rubies. Where then ſhall wiſdom be found?—GOD underſtandeth the way thereof, and knoweth the place thereof:" and, as we ſhall now proceed to ſhew,

II. True wiſdom, or the *ſaving* knowledge of divine things, is the ſpecial and peculiar gift of God: for ſo much at leaſt ſeems confeſſed and implied in the pſalmiſt's addreſs to God, "In the hidden parts *thou* haſt made me to know wiſdom."

By a *ſpecial* and *peculiar* gift we would be underſtood to mean, a favor conferred upon an object without any reſpect to his worthineſs or demerit in the leaſt degree; to which he could lay no juſt claim, and which he could never have deſerved; and which is beſtowed upon him while it is denied to others.

That

That divine wisdom is indeed the gift of God, may be asserted upon the authority of numerous testimonies from the volume of inspiration. And to make a christian know what wisdom in the *inward parts* is, may be reckoned the first work of the Spirit of God upon a regenerate soul. For as in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light": so, that "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shineth into the believing heart to give him the light of *saving knowlege*." And, therefore, when the apostle is sent for the conversion of the Gentiles, he is sent, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light." An image frequently made use of in the sacred writings to represent conversion and regeneration: as when the Ephesians are told, "Ye were *darkness*, but now are ye *light in the Lord*:" for as natural light discovers to us objects before invisible to the natural eye, so spiritual illumination unveils to the intellectual sight objects before invisible to the eye of the soul: and as really as natural light is the

the gift of God to all the world, ſo is ſpiritual diſcernment to his elect people. "But the natural man, or man by nature, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned. For what man knoweth the things of a man, ſave the ſpirit of a man which is in him? even ſo the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

For this reaſon when St. Peter is writing to thoſe whoſe ſouls were purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit, and who were born again of the incorruptible ſeed of the word of God, he calls them a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they ſhould ſhew forth the praiſes * of him *who had called them out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*:" which is but another expreſſion for being "made to know wiſdom in the hidden parts:" or for "putting on the new man,

* Τας αρετας—the virtues, or the power and efficacy of divine grace and wiſdom, by their ſanctifying fruits and effects.

which

which is renewed in *knowlege* after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10.

This manner of expreſſion, conveys to us an indirect proof of the ſecond propoſition in our text; which is indeed aſſerted in the plaineſt terms in the epiſtle of St. James. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights"—and, "if any man lack wiſdom, let him aſk it of God." For the Lord giveth wiſdom," Prov. ii. 6. In all which paſſages we are to underſtand, that ſaving knowlege, or divine wiſdom, is the *ſpecial* and *peculiar* gift of God, and that by which his choſen people are *diſtinguiſhed* from the reſt of the world.

It would be matter of aſtoniſhment to a ſerious mind, that a truth ſo evident as this ſhould admit of controverſy and debate, were it not that there have been people wild enough to diſpute the certainty of their own exiſtence. Who can for a moment obſerve with attention the diſpenſations of God in his providence as well as in his grace, and after that doubt whether or no ſpiritual wiſdom, or ſaving knowlege, be the gift of

God in the moſt *ſpecial*, *peculiar*, and *ſovereign* beſtowment of it? eſpecially when we conſider, that the outward means, appointed by the all-wiſe God for the communication of this wiſdom, is his ſpecial gift. The light of divine revelation is not univerſal, but is confined to particular nations, and frequently to a little handful of people in a nation. The diſpenſations of God in this reſpect are *diſtinguiſhing*. We ſee from experience, hiſtory, and fact, let oppoſers harangue as they may, or blaſpheme as they dare, that God ſendeth his goſpel to ſome places and not to others. He walketh in the midſt of the ſeven golden candleſticks, and holdeth the ſtars in his hand, and cauſeth his light and truth to ſhine *where-ever* and *whenever* he *pleaſeth*. This is the Lord's doing, however marvellous it may appear in our eyes †.

Again;

† Some of the fineſt writers in defence of the chriſtian religion, have been gravelled at the objection brought againſt it by infidels for its defect in point of univerſality. And the reaſon is, becauſe they are blind to the doctrine of God's ſovereignty, and have never ſeen the force of that ſimple appeal

Again; as it is true that all men have not the *means* of divine knowlege, so, among those who do enjoy the same means, it is evident they do not *all* attain the end in an equal or in any degree. The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not; it shineth *unto* them, but not *into* them. It was the same seed that the sower scattered among the several sorts of hearers spoken of in the parable: but how awfully different was the effect! Many are *called* by the *same* means, but few *are chosen* ‡: it is not said few chuse, but *are*

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peal which the Lord of the vineyard makes in the parable, "May I not do what I will with mine own?"—The learned Bishop Butler hath indeed finely illustrated the analogy between the dispensations of God in his providence and in his grace; and hath shewn, beyond dispute, that the conduct of God in both is liable to the same impious and unjust objections. The truth of the matter is, that the old leaven is still at work within us; we are not willing to think and speak *as Men*, but we would be *as Gods*.

‡ Let the attentive reader observe, it is not said, few *chuse*, but *are chosen*: and the reason of this is assigned in another place, where it is said, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but *of God* who sheweth mercy."—And again, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

chosen; that we may remember, the excellency of the power is not of man, but of God. The *same word* is the savor of death unto death to some, which becomes the savor of life unto life to others. And in all these means, the success and blessing are to be ascribed to the power and grace of God. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but *God* must give the increase. So then neither is he that planteth *any thing*, nor he that watereth *any thing*, but *God* who giveth the increase, and worketh all in all:" and though there are many who partake of the outward means appointed for the communication of saving knowlege, yet it is the peculiar and special gift of God that any receive the spiritual benefit of them.

And it is an absolute gift, perfectly *free*, *unconditional*, and *irrespective*. No good use, as it is called, that any can make of the *light of nature*, will deserve, in the least degree, this supernatural light of divine illumination. The dispensations of God, in this respect too, are *sovereign* in the highest sense of the word; agreeable to what the great apostle declares concerning himself and

others

others who were made partakers of true and ſaving wiſdom, at a time the moſt unlikely, "when they were walking according to the courſe of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that worketh in the children of diſobedience; having their converſation in the luſts of the fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh and of the mind: but God, for his great love, wherewith he choſe in his free grace and rich mercy to love them, *even when* they were dead in ſins, quickened them together with Chriſt." And in another place we find it upon record, as a proof of the perfect freeneſs and ſovereignty of God, in his diſpoſal of that wiſdom which maketh wiſe unto ſalvation, that he beſtowed this bleſſing upon ſuch as had been the moſt notorious and profane ſinners; "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners," 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. And we have the reaſon for all this aſſigned in 1 Cor. i. 29. "that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence:" that all ſpiritual bleſſings, and among others that

of ſaving knowlege, might appear beyond diſpute to be the *ſpecial* gift of God.

In perfect harmony with which, we hear the apoſtle Paul praying to God in behalf of his fellow-ſinners, that "*he* would *give* unto them the ſpirit of *wiſdom* and revelation in the *knowlege* of him: the eyes of their underſtanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the ſaints," Eph. i. Nor can we imagine that this prayer was offered up, but from a conviction of its being the grand prerogative of the moſt High, to make a fallen, blind, ignorant creature, know wiſdom in the hidden parts; as well as that it was a ſpecial and peculiar gift of God, by which all his faithful people are diſtinguiſhed; agreeable to that beautiful clauſe in the covenant-promiſe, "I will put my law in their *inward parts*, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they ſhall be my people: for they ſhall all *know* me from the leaſt of them unto the greateſt of them, ſaith the Lord," Jer. xxxi.

So

So that upon the whole it is evident, that if regeneration, converſion, and ſupernatural illumination, be the ſpecial gifts of God and peculiar to his choſen people, ſo is *ſaving knowlege*: or in other words, it is of the free, diſtinguiſhing, and ſovereign grace of God, that any of the corrupt and apoſtate offspring of Adam, are made to know divine wiſdom in the hidden man of the heart. But

III. The ſins of thoſe who are poſſeſſed of ſaving knowlege, have in them a peculiar aggravation, and are in ſome regard more offenſive in the ſight of God than the ſins of ſuch as are deſtitute of it.

This is what the penitent pſalmiſt deſigns to confeſs in the paſſage before us. Acknowleging moſt ingenuouſly how heinous and abominable a crime he had committed, as it was perpetrated in the face of *ſpiritual Convictions*, of *ſupernatural Light*, and *ſaving Knowlege*. As if he had ſaid, 'Had I been in a ſtate of ignorance or heatheniſm, the offence might have admitted of ſome apology, and the guilt might have been exte-

nuated in ſome degree. But, in the preſent caſe, every circumſtance in the ſtate of the offender only ſerves to diſcover the vileneſs of the offence.'

Herein we learn how true repentance operates upon the gracious heart. In the view of freſh iniquities, every ſpiritual favor beſtowed by the hand of divine grace, tends to lay the ſinner lower and lower in the duſt of humility and ſelf-abhorrence. To this truth the conſcience of every regenerate perſon can bear witneſs: and it is remarkable, though highly juſt and fit, that the ſenſe and guilt of *one* ſin, committed after the real chriſtian has been brought to the ſaving knowlege of the things of God, is generally attended with greater miſery, anguiſh, and ſelf-condemnation, than the recollection of all the innumerable tranſgreſſions he committed before his converſion. Like Peter, when he thinks thereon, he weeps *bitterly*.

Nor can it in the nature of things be otherwiſe. The greater knowlege and clearer light we have, the greater muſt be the guilt and ſhame of ſinning againſt it.

The

The more abundant the grace, and the more exceeding the mercy which is manifested towards us, the more abominable and aggravated must our offences against such mercy and grace be. And this is the case with every regenerate person, who sins against the *saving Knowlege* of God and his Christ. While others offend against natural, they against supernatural light and convictions: while others against creating and preserving, they against electing and redeeming love.

All men indeed are under infinite obligations to admire and adore, to love and obey God, both for his own excellency, and for his unspeakable goodness to them; but the regenerate, they whom the Father of lights hath blessed with wisdom that maketh wise unto salvation, what tongue can tell, what imagination can conceive, when eternity itself will not be sufficient to reveal the infinite obligations they lie under, to love, admire, and obey him. The christian has infinite obligations multiplied by infinite, to engage him to study to please God, and to fear to offend him: and consequently these additional obligations to love God,

render

render ſin ſo much the more vile, baſe, and deteſtable.

> Thou moſt indulgent, moſt tremendous pow'r!
> Still more tremendous, for thy wondrous love!
> That arms, with awe more awful, thy commands;
> And foul tranſgreſſion dips in *ſeven-fold* guilt.

And the conduct of God towards his people, hath in general been a practical illuſtration of this truth. The very hiſtory to which the pſalm before us refers, is a confirmation of it: for though the Lord fully forgave the ſin of which David had been guilty, he did not leave him without an ample teſtimony of his hatred of it: "he viſited his offences with a rod, and his ſin with ſcourges: for this, ſaid the Lord, the ſword ſhall never depart from thy houſe, and I will raiſe up evil againſt thee out of thine own houſe, and thy neighbours ſhall lie with thy wives in the ſight of the ſun." So again, that the Lord might teſtify how exceedingly offenſive the ſins of his own favorites were to him, ſee how ſeverely he reſented the pride and ingratitude of Hezekiah. What, though he could appeal to

God upon a former occaſion, and ſay, "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy ſight"—yet, when he ſinned againſt God, there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah, and upon Jeruſalem. And what an undeniable proof have we, that God looks upon the tranſgreſſions of his peculiar people as uncommonly aggravating, from his conduct towards Eli; of whom the ſacred hiſtory informs us, that his ſons behaved themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not. "Behold, ſaid the Lord unto him for this crime, the days come that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's houſe, that there ſhall not be an old man in thine houſe. And the man of thine, whom I ſhall not cut off, ſhall be to conſume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and the iniquity of thine houſe ſhall not be purged with ſacrifice nor offering for ever," 1 Sam. ii. 31—33.

But why ſhould I attempt to produce many arguments in defence of a truth which carries its own evidence with it? If it were

a juſt

a juſt charge that the apoſtle brought againſt thoſe who had no other knowlege of God than what they could learn from the light of nature, that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful;" if it were an aggravation of their ſinfulneſs and guilt to ſin againſt *ſuch* knowlege, and that, *knowing* the judgment of God againſt thoſe who committed idolatry and unnatural luſts, they continued to live in them—how much more aggravating muſt their offences be, who ſin againſt far *greater Light* and *clearer Knowlege!* If it were an additional circumſtance in the guilt of king Belſhazzar, that he *knew* the puniſhment which his grand-father's pride and rebellion againſt the God of heaven had brought upon him; if it aggravated his offence that, notwithſtanding he *knew* this, he did not humble himſelf, nor glorify that God in whoſe hands his life, his kingdom, and all his ways were—how much more abominable muſt their iniquities be, whoſe eyes have been enlightened into the knowlege of the moſt High; who are intimately acquainted with the God of heaven, and who

who have ſeen an infinitely more ſtriking diſplay of his hatred of ſin in the ſufferings of Chriſt, than either Nebuchadnezzar or Belſhazzar ever ſaw!

Sinning againſt light and knowlege in allowed practice, is made a conſtituent part of the character of an apoſtate. "If they ſin *wilfully* after they have received the *knowlege* of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin:" God looks upon ſuch as upon thoſe who will never come to repentance: becauſe an avowed and *wilful* practice of ſin, can never conſiſt with the poſſeſſion of true grace in the heart. And therefore the apoſtle, in ſpeaking of himſelf as a blaſphemer, a perſecutor, and an injurious reviler of Chriſt and his goſpel, adds, but I did it *ignorantly* in unbelief, and not againſt light and knowlege: what he did, he did *willingly*, but not *wilfully*; in a ſtate of ignorance, and not of wilful rejection of Chriſt or his goſpel; and therefore he obtained mercy. So great a difference doth knowlege and ignorance put between the ſame ſin. And this may be the reaſon of the pſalmiſt's manner of addreſs in prayer

to

to God, when he ſays, "Keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins, let them not have dominion over me: then ſhall I be upright, and I ſhall be innocent from the *great tranſgreſſion*," Pſalm xix. 13. free from the guilt, the unpardonable guilt of ſinning wilfully after having received the knowlege of the truth.

There is ſomething remarkable and very illuſtrative of this point, in the prophecy of Jeremiah, where he is attempting to apologize for the hardneſs and impenitency of ſome of the people of the Jews, by ſaying, "Surely theſe are fooliſh, for they *know not* the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God." Then he goes on, "I will get me unto the great men, and will ſpeak unto them, for they *have known* the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but theſe have altogether broken the yoke, and burſt the bonds." Upon which he is taught to cry out in the name of the Lord, "How ſhall I pardon thee for *this?* ſhall I not viſit for theſe things? ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this?"—A nation whom neither afflictions could hum-

ble,

ble, nor mercies ſoften, and whoſe aggravating ſin was, that they *knew* the way of the Lord, but would not walk in it. Jer. v.

Let all this ſuffice to ſhew, how certainly the offences of thoſe who are made partakers of that ſaving knowlege which is the ſpecial gift of God's grace, are uncommonly vile and hateful in the ſight of God.

APPLICATION.

Seeing now, my beloved brethren, that the knowlege of divine things is ſuch a material part of true religion, it is a concern of no trifling importance to every one of us. If ſo, you muſt be convinced of the great propriety of my putting you upon the moſt ſerious inquiry, whether or no you are partakers of it. True religion, real happineſs, and ſaving knowlege, are linked together in an indiſſoluble chain of connection: and he who is deſtitute of either of them, is in fact deſtitute of them all.

Be it known unto you therefore, that ſaving knowlege conſiſts in the knowlege of the *true God*, as he hath been pleaſed to reveal

reveal himſelf to us in the ſacred ſcriptures: of his nature, attributes, and perfections, as they are there repreſented, and not as our fooliſh imaginations conceit. Every natural heart forms ſuch an idea of the divine nature as beſt ſuits its own corruption and depravity. Hence ſome cannot bear to think of any other God but what is *all Mercy:* as real an idol as that golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king ſet up in the plains of Dura: an idol that exiſts nowhere but in their own brain. Others indeed will allow him to have ſome ſhare of juſtice, but not ſo great a ſhare but that he muſt diſpenſe with it and his truth too, rather than make them ſuffer the eternal torments of hell: but God is what he is, and will be unchangeably *the ſame*, let infidelity deny, let ignorance miſtake, or impiety blaſpheme as it may. "A God of truth, and without iniquity, juſt and right is he *."

This

* Not *thus*, our infidels th' Eternal draw
A God all o'er, conſummate, abſolute,
Full-orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete:

They

This ſaving knowlege of the true God muſt be attended with true *Self-knowlege*, or with an acquaintance with our own characters and ſtate as ſet before us in the unerring word of truth. For into this glaſs we muſt look, if we would ſee our own moral image. It is God's prerogative to ſearch and know the heart of man, that myſtery of iniquity; and he hath been pleaſed to draw its likeneſs in this bleſſed Book.

It hath been ſaid, 'Man know thyſelf; all knowlege centers here'—but this is falſe: for as the knowlege of God and of ourſelves is indiſpenſably needful, ſo alſo is the knowlege of Jeſus Chriſt, the glorious Mediator between God and man.

If an humble inquirer ſhould be ready to ſay, how ſhall I be certain that I am poſſeſſed of this ſaving knowlege, which is ſo eſſential a part of vital religion? it may be re-

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They ſet at odds heav'n's jarring attributes;
Bid *Mercy* triumph over—God himſelf.
Undeify'd by their opprobrious praiſe:
A God *all* Mercy is a God *unjuſt*.

YOUNG.

plied, if you have a saving knowlege of the *Holiness* of the divine nature, it has laid you in the dust of humility and self-loathing: if you have been enlightened to see that he is a God of inflexible *Justice*, you have been brought to confess yourself a guilty and condemned creature, and to have no hope of acceptance before him, but by falling at the footstool of his tender mercy: and if you have been favored with a spiritual view of the riches of his *Mercy*, it has engaged thy heart in gratitude, love, and praise to him; for it is an invariable maxim in christian divinity, that, "he who *loveth not, knoweth not* God:" and, "we love him, because he first loved us:" and, "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; he that saith, I *know* him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

So that if you have never been really humbled under a sense of your sins; if you have never been convinced of your guilty and condemned state on account of them; and if your hearts and lives do not in some measure testify your unfeigned desire to serve

and

and pleaſe God; you may be able to think, to write, or to ſpeak, moſt clearly and ſublimely upon the attributes and perfections of the ſupreme Being, but you have no more *ſaving Knowlege* of him than the devils and damned ſpirits have.

If you have a *ſaving Knowlege* of *yourſelves*, you know that you have loſt the image, forfeited the favor, and incurred the diſpleaſure of God. You ſee your true ſtate by nature, deſcribed in thoſe few but expreſſive words in the book of Revelation; you know that, in a ſpiritual reſpect, you are "*wretched*, and *miſerable*, and *poor*, and *blind*, and *naked*," Rev. iii. 17. If ſuch convictions as theſe have never reached your heart, your preſent condition is that of blindneſs, ignorance, and deluſion; and you know nothing of yourſelf as you ought to know.

With regard to *Chriſt*, if you have a ſaving knowlege of his perſon; of the deſign of his incarnation, ſufferings, and death; and of the offices he ſuſtains for the ſalvation of ſinners, you eſteem all other wiſdom no better than folly in compariſon of this:

you ſee ſomething ſo invaluable in this Pearl of great price, that you "count all things but dung and droſs for the excellency of the knowlege of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord:" you "love the Lord and Saviour in ſincerity and truth:" and as a proof of it, your earneſt and daily prayer is, that nothing may be ſuffered to come in competition with him; that your heart may be intirely his, and that without reſerve you may be willing to part with every thing for his ſake: for ſo it is written, "My ſheep hear my voice; I know them, and am known of them; they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life." Is it ſo with *you?* have you *ſuch* a knowlege of the Saviour? perhaps you have never ſeen any thing uncommonly deſirable and lovely in him; never felt a ſpark of love kindling in your hearts towards him: perhaps you prefer the pleaſures and vanities of this preſent evil world, its periſhing riches, and the eſteem of your fellow creatures, to the pleaſures of religion, the favor of God, and the unſearchable riches of Chriſt: if ſo, you have not ſeen him, neither known him: all your knowlege about Chriſt,

Chriſt, that you may have gathered from men or books, will avail you nothing at the laſt day.

'A ſoul, ſaith the pious and learned Archbiſhop Leighton, that hath God's peculiar light or wiſdom in the hidden man of the heart communicated to it, ſees in God, and in his Son Jeſus Chriſt, ſuch an excellency, as inflames his heart with love to them and delight in them: it takes him up with the eſtimation of the Lord Jeſus, and makes the world, and all things in it, appear mean and contemptible. A little of this light is of more worth than all the ſpeculative knowlege the greateſt doctors can attain to; it is of a more excellent kind and original, it is from heaven; and ye know that one beam of the ſun is of more worth than the light of ten thouſand torches: it is a pure, undecaying light; whereas the other is groſs, and earthly, and laſts but a while. Let us not therefore think it incredible, that a poor unlettered chriſtian may know more of God in the beſt kind of knowlege, than any the wiſeſt and moſt learned can do: for the one knows

God only by man's light, the other knows him by his own light; and that is the only right knowlege: as the ſun cannot be ſeen but by its own light, ſo neither can God be *ſavingly known*, but by his own revealing.'

But let me delight myſelf with the hope that, by what hath been now delivered, you will be prevailed upon to ſpend the remaining part of a ſhort life in ſeeking after true wiſdom; in begging of God to ſhine into your hearts to give you the light of the knowlege of his glory; of Chriſt's ſalvation; and of your perſonal intereſt in it; that ſo you may never periſh, but may have everlaſting life.

And here let me introduce a ſeaſonable word of advice to thoſe, who have been long uſed to liſten and to aſſent to the great things contained in the ſcriptures; and that is this, not to reſt ſatisfied with any kind or degree of knowlege below what is *ſpiritual* and *ſaving*; ſuch as affects the *heart*, while it informs the *underſtanding*. Beware, my fellow-ſinners, of profeſſing to know God, but in works denying him: beware of the *form* of knowlege in divine things, without the

the internal *power* of it. "When thou shalt incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine *heart* to understanding; yea, when thou criest after knowlege in fervent prayer, and liftest up thy voice with repeated earnestness: when thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasures: when wisdom entereth into thine *heart*, and knowlege is *pleasant* unto thy soul; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowlege of God," Prov. ii. "Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness: for if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

As for those amongst you, who can with sincerity adopt the language of the text with application to yourselves; let me call upon you, let me provoke you, to bless God for this unspeakable, this precious gift of his distinguishing grace. "For who made thee to differ from another? and what hast thou, that thou hast not received?" O let your hearts ascend in ceaseless fervent praise to him, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. And above all things, remem-

ber what an obligation you lie under from the ſaving knowlege of God, to conſtant obedience to him. Abſtain from all appearance of evil. The Lord hath made you to know wiſdom in the inward parts, not that you may invent excuſes and apologies for ſinning againſt him, but that you may the more diligently ſtudy to pleaſe him, and fear to offend him: not that you ſhould find out the art of living in friendſhip with the world and with God too, "for the friendſhip of the world is enmity againſt God:" nor that you ſhould learn how to ſuit your religion to your convenience, but that you ſhould be *wholly* on the Lord's ſide. "For the wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without *partiality* and without *hypocriſy*."

"This I ſay therefore, and teſtify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having their underſtandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the *blindneſs* of their *hearts*. For this ye *know*,

that no whoremonger, nor unclean perſon, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were ſometimes darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: and have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but rather reprove them. And, let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven: that ſo ye may adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things: and that all who ſee you may acknowlege that ye are the ſeed which the Lord hath bleſſed."

In a word, may the ever-memorable, moſt affecting, and dying advice of the royal penman of this pſalm to his ſon Solomon, be powerfully impreſſed upon all our hearts by the Spirit of God. AND NOW, SOLOMON MY SON, KNOW THOU THE GOD OF THY FATHERS, AND SERVE HIM WITH A PERFECT HEART AND A WILLING MIND: FOR THE LORD SEARCHETH ALL HEARTS, AND UNDERSTANDETH ALL THE IMAGINATIONS OF THE THOUGHTS: IF THOU

SEEK

SEEK HIM, HE WILL BE FOUND OF THEE; BUT IF THOU FORSAKE HIM, HE WILL CAST THEE OFF FOR EVER.

AND NOW UNTO THE KING ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, THE ONLY WISE GOD AND OUR SAVIOUR, BE ASCRIBED THE KINGDOM, POWER, AND GLORY. AMEN.

PRAYER.

"O thou infinitely wise, holy, and mer-
"ciful God, whom to know is life eternal;
"we desire to approach the throne of thy
"grace through the merit and intercession
"of a dear Redeemer, and to plead with
"thee for those blessings which thou hast
"promised to such as seek thy face and
"favor in him. We are alienated from the
"life and love of God by nature, through
"the ignorance that is in us, because of
"the blindness of our hearts. O then do
"thou, O Lord, who didst once command
"the light to shine out of darkness, shine
"into our benighted minds to give us the
"knowlege of thy glory in the person of
Jesus

"Jesus Christ. Every good gift and every "perfect gift is from above, and cometh "down from the Father of lights; and "thou hast been pleased in thy condescend-"ing mercy and grace to tell us, that if "any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of "God: help us, we pray thee, so to ask "as that we may have, so to seek as that "we may find: and do thou, O God, en-"lighten our understandings that we may "understand the scriptures, which are able "to make us wise unto salvation through "faith that is in Christ Jesus. Discover "to us, by thy divine illumination, such a "view of thy holiness, as shall lay us low "in the dust of humility and self-abasement "—of thy justice, as shall convince us of "our guilt and danger on account of our "transgressions against thee—and of thy "rich mercy in Christ Jesus, as shall lift up "our hearts with hope and confidence in thee.

"And O thou blessed and adorable Jesus, "who art the wisdom of God, and in "whom it hath pleased the Father that all "the treasures of wisdom and knowlege "should dwell; as no one knoweth the

"Father

" Father but the Son, and he to whom the
" Son will reveal him, be thou the great
" Prophet of our ſouls: in thy light may
" we ſee light: give us an underſtanding
" to know him that is true: chaſe away the
" thick clouds of ignorance that hang over
" our minds: ariſe and ſhine upon us, thou
" glorious Sun of Righteouſneſs, that
" though we were darkneſs, we may be light
" in the Lord, and that we may all know
" the Lord from the leaſt even unto the
" greateſt. Manifeſt thyſelf to us as thou
" doſt not to the world. Reveal thyſelf in
" all our hearts by faith as the hope of glory.
" May we be determined from a ſpiritual
" ſight of thy beauty, worth, and glory,
" to know nothing elſe ſave Jeſus Chriſt and
" him crucified; and may we count all
" things but dung and droſs for the excel-
" lency of the knowlege of Chriſt Jeſus
" the Lord.

" And we intreat thee, O thou Holy
" Ghoſt the Comforter, to come and take
" poſſeſſion of all our hearts, as the Spirit
" of wiſdom and revelation in the knowlege
" of God and his Chriſt: the eyes of our
" underſtanding being enlightened, that we
" may

"may know what is the hope of his calling, "and what the riches of the glory of his "inheritance in the ſaints. Do thou lead, "and guide, and keep us in the truth as it "is in Jeſus, and make us to know wiſdom "in the inward parts.

"And O holy, bleſſed, and glorious "Trinity, if it hath pleaſed thee to diſtin-"guiſh us by this ineſtimable and precious "gift of heavenly wiſdom, may we never "forget who made us to differ from another. "Not unto us, but unto thee, O Lord, "be all the glory. Help us to ſhew forth "the praiſes of him who hath called us out "of darkneſs into his marvellous light. "May we walk like the children of light; "and may our light ſo ſhine before men, "that they may ſee our good works, and "glorify our Father which is in heaven: "till we come to be partakers of the inhe-"ritance among the ſaints in light, and "join that bleſſed throng, who ſhall aſcribe "bleſſing and glory, and wiſdom and thankſ-"giving, and honor and power, and might "unto God and the Lamb, for ever and "ever." Amen.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

PSALM li. 7. 9.

PURGE ME WITH HYSSOP AND I SHALL BE CLEAN: WASH ME, AND I SHALL BE WHITER THAN SNOW.

HIDE THY FACE FROM MY SINS, AND BLOT OUT ALL MINE INIQUITIES.

THE great buſineſs of our life, while we are travelling through this world, ſhould be to enquire, how we may be happy for ever in the next. For what will it avail that we have been rich, or great here, if, when our natural life expires, our happineſs expires with it? A recollection of the ſhort-lived, momentary pleaſures we have enjoyed, and which are paſt never to

 return,

return, will weigh very little, if any thing, againſt that endleſs ſcene of miſery and woe which ſhall await the impenitent and ungodly.

Of the truth of this remark every man's reaſon would convince him, were it not that an inconſiderate and blind attachment to preſent and ſenſible objects is too apt to engroſs the heart. But however, the time is haſtening upon us, when every ſinner's miſery will appear beyond diſpute, not more the deſert of his offences, than the effect of his madneſs and folly. Happy they, who know and feel the truth before it be eternally too late. Happy they, who, like the royal penitent, to whom the pſalm before us refers, are brought to ſee their ſinfulneſs, and confeſs their guilt; to juſtify God, and condemn themſelves; and to make application to him, who alone can forgive ſin, for a perſonal intereſt in the multitude of his tender mercies.

Under a deep and affecting view of his need of pardon, the pſalmiſt is not ſatisfied with aſking it in a careleſs and indifferent manner, but urges his requeſt again and again;

again; and is more and more importunate with God for the bleſſing. It ſhould ſeem as if a ſenſe of his vileneſs increaſed with his deſire of forgiveneſs. For after having ſaid before, "Waſh me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanſe me from my ſin," he adds, "purge me with hyſſop, and I ſhall be clean: waſh me, and I ſhall be whiter than ſnow." He prays that God would cleanſe him from his ſins, and from the defilement he had contracted by them. *Purge me with hyſſop*, that is, pardon my ſins, and let me know that they are pardoned, that I may be reſtored to thoſe privileges, which by ſin I had forfeited and loſt. This expreſſion alludes to a circumſtance under the ceremonial diſpenſation, that of cleanſing the leper, or thoſe who were unclean by the touch of a dead body, by ſprinkling water, or blood, or both upon them with a bunch of hyſſop; by which they were cleanſed from the pollution they had contracted: but the ultimate deſign of it muſt lead us to the end of that ceremony, the blood of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; which is therefore called, *the blood of ſprinkling*, which

purgeth the conſcience from dead works, from the guilt and filth of ſin. *Waſh me*, in the fountain of that blood which is opened from the dear Redeemer's ſide, and which cleanſeth from all ſin, and I ſhall be whiter than ſnow; lovely and acceptable in the ſight of that God, who for my tranſgreſſions is juſtly diſpleaſed †.

As if this were not ſufficient, ſee how the pſalmiſt *wreſtles* with God for the bleſſing: ſee how like Jacob of old, he ſays unto God, "I will not let thee go, except thou bleſs me." He was perſuaded that to him all hearts were open, and that from him no ſecrets were hid: that God had been an eye-witneſs to every corrupt principle, and vile affection, and to every degree of aggravation in the ſin he had committed; and therefore he intreats him to hide his face from his ſins, to overlook them, and not to

† Admonet nomen *expiationis* & *aſperſionis*, quoties pro remiſſione peccatorum vota facimus, mentes noſtras ad ſacrificium erigendas eſſe, quo Patrem Chriſtus placavit.

CALVIN.

enter

enter into judgment with him for them, but to blot them all out of the book of his remembrance, that they might never appear in charge against him ‡.

From this view of the words before us, we may collect some striking lines in the character of a real christian. And,

I. Every true penitent is brought to see that sin is of a *filthy* and *defiling* nature: and from an affecting conviction of it is led to pray with the psalmist, "*purge* me with hyssop, and I shall be *clean*: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

That sin is of a polluting and loathsome nature, is undeniably clear from the sort of representations and images we have of it in the sacred writings. It is frequently compared to blood and wounds, to sores and to scum, to the leprosy, and the like.

‡ Hinc intelligimus justificari nos coram Deo, ubi voluntariâ oblivione peccata nostra delet: atque hanc esse nostram puritatem, dum gratuita venia nos dignatur.

CALVIN: in loc.

The ſtate and conduct of the leper under the ceremonial œconomy was ſtrikingly deſcriptive of the *filthineſs* of ſin, and of the character of one who is made ſenſible of it. When any man among the people of Iſrael was found with the plague of the leproſy upon him, the prieſt pronounced him *utterly unclean*. And the leper in whom the plague was, his clothes were to be rent, and his head bare, and he was to put a covering upon his upper lip, and to cry, *unclean, unclean*. All the days wherein the plague was upon him, he was to be accounted *defiled*, and he was to dwell alone, without the camp. The Holy Ghoſt this ſignifying, it may be, in the ſpiritual intendment of it, that the ſtate of a ſinner who has the leproſy of ſin upon him, is a filthy and loathſome ſtate in the ſight of an holy God; and, that the penitent ſoul, who feels the miſery and danger of this plague, who has a practical ſenſe of the corruption of his nature and conduct, will have his *heart* rent inſtead of his garments; his head bowed down, like the poor publican's, with humility and confuſion; having nothing to

plead in extenuation of his vileneſs; with his hand upon his mouth, and his mouth in the duſt; juſtifying God, and condemning himſelf; crying out, unclean, unclean, and acknowleging his unworthineſs not only to lift up his eyes unto the God of heaven, but even to have any fellowſhip with his ſaints upon earth. Lev. 13.

The defilement and corruption of ſin is as plainly typified to us by all the *legal purifications* under the old Teſtament; and eſpecially by the waters of purification which were ſprinkled by the prieſt upon thoſe who were ceremonially unclean. They were called expreſsly, the *waters* of *purification* for *ſin*: and that they referred to the actual, internal pollution of the conſcience by ſin, is indiſputable from that paſſage in the Hebrews, where it it is ſaid, "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer ſprinkling the unclean, ſanctifieth to the purifying of the fleſh, how much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt, who through the eternal Spirit offered himſelf without ſpot unto God, *purge your conſciences!*" Heb. 9.

That representation which we have of sin in the prophecy of Isaiah, is equally illustrative of its loathsomeness and pollution. For when the Lord is pleased by the mouth of his servant to set forth the base ingratitude, hardness, rebellion, and impenitency of that people who had received distinguishing favors from him, he is taught to take up the following lamentation over them—"Ah, *sinful* nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but *wounds*, and *bruises*, and *putrifying sores*." This was the reason why all their religious services were so hateful and offensive to God: because when the head and heart are corrupt and impure, when the mind and conscience are defiled, every thing else must be filthy and abominable. Therefore,

fore, says the prophet in the name of God, "*Wash* ye, make you *clean*, put away the evil of your doings before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well." Not as if it were possible for them to purify their own hearts; but the Lord commands this in order that they might become *sensible* of their uncleanness; and then he adds immediately, "Come now let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" for pardoning mercy can save from the utmost guilt, and redeeming blood can discharge the deepest stain of sin. Isa. i.

In allusion to the *filthiness of sin*, it is that Jerusalem is called the bloody city, and compared to a pot whose *scum* is not gone out of it. Thus saith the Lord God, "Wo to the bloody city, the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone off it; I will even make the pile for fire great." Why? "She hath wearied herself with lies," that is, with lying vanities, and fatal delusions, "and her great scum went not out of her. In thy filthiness is

lewdneſs;" repeated acts of ſin have confirmed it into an habit. "I have purged thee, and thou waſt not purged;" all my appointed means of cleanſing have proved ineffectual, therefore thou ſhalt not enjoy them, "thou ſhalt not be purged any more, but I will cauſe my fury to reſt upon thee. I the Lord have ſpoken it, it ſhall come to paſs; I will do it, and will not repent." Ezek. 24.

But of all the paſſages recorded in the volume of divine inſpiration upon this ſubject, there are none which paint the defiling nature of ſin in more affecting colors than that in Ezek. xvi. where the prophet is directed to write to Jeruſalem in this humiliating ſtile, and to ſay, "Thus ſaith the Lord God unto Jeruſalem, Thy birth and thy nativity was of the land of Canaan, thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite," intimating thereby the ſtate of poverty, ſubjection, idolatry and wretchedneſs in which they were born. "And as for thy nativity in the day thou waſt born, thy navel was not cut, neither waſt thou waſhed in water to ſupple thee: thou

thou waſt not ſalted at all, nor ſwaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of theſe unto thee, to have compaſſion upon thee: but thou waſt caſt out in the open field, to the loathing of thy perſon, in the day thou waſt born."—What an object of miſery and diſtreſs was here! Form to yourſelf, if it be poſſible, ſome faint idea of ſuch an abject and deplorable condition as this! and then you have ſome diſtant conception of the ſtate of all men by nature on account of ſin. How poor, how wretched, how miſerable, how blind, how naked, how filthy, no tongue can tell, no imagination conceive. Hateful to God; ſhapen in iniquity; born in ſin; children of wrath; and in themſelves, hopeleſs and helpleſs.

Upon this authority the ſacred ſcriptures give the title of *abominable* and *filthy*, to mankind univerſally. And therefore when Eliphaz was endeavoring to bring down what he judged to be the pride and ſelf-complacency of Job's heart, he took care to let him know that to be a *man*, a *ſinner*, and an *unclean creature*, were inſepa-

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rable things. "What is man, ſays he, that he ſhould be *clean?* or he that is born of a woman that he ſhould be righteous? Behold, he putteth no truſt in his ſaints; yea, the very heavens are not clean in his ſight: *how much more abominable* * and *filthy* † is *Man*, who drinketh in iniquity like water?" This is not to be underſtood of any particular man, but of all men; of man, as man: neither is it his poverty, ſickneſs, or rags, or any external defilement, but his ſin, which renders him thus *filthy* in the ſight of God: it is becauſe he hath ſuch a natural inclination, and earneſt deſire, ſuch an habitual thirſt after ſin, and uncommon pleaſure in ſinning, that he is ſaid to drink

* The Hebrew word imports that which is rejected by all the ſenſes; that which the eye cannot endure to look upon, which the ear cannot bear to hear, that which is a ſtink in the noſtrils, and which the hand will not touch. Such an abominable thing is ſinful man in the ſight of an holy God!

† The original word is derived from a root which ſignifies *corrupt, rotten, putrefied*: it is found but three times in ſcripture in this conſtruction, as ſome obſerve; and in all of them it is uſed to ſhew the defilement and wickedneſs of human nature in its fallen ſtate. Job xv. 16. Pſalm xiv. 3. and liii. 3.

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in iniquity like water; committing iniquity with greedineſs, and ſerving ſin in the luſts thereof. Job xv.

So when the great God is repreſented as looking down from heaven upon the children of men, in order that ſome judgment might be formed of their nature and character from their conduct; we are told, that they are altogether become abominable and filthy. And leſt we ſhould imagine that this ſentence was confined to any particular age or people, we find it applied in ſuch a manner by an apoſtle, as leaves us without doubt that it reſpects *every Individual* of the human race at *all times*. As it is written, "There is *none* righteous, there is *none* that doeth good, no, not *One*. Their throat is an open *ſepulchre*, full of rottenneſs, ſtench, and corruption, and the *poiſon* of aſps is under their lips."

Not that we are to underſtand theſe expreſſions in their literal ſenſe, but as deſcriptive of that filthineſs and defilement which is the effect of ſin. A defilement of an *internal*, *moral*, and *ſpiritual* nature; and which ſtands in direct oppoſition to the unſpotted

ſpotted holineſs and purity of the bleſſed God: of whom we are informed, that "He is not a God that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall evil dwell with him: that the fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in his ſight, for he hateth all the workers of iniquity: and that he will deſtroy them that ſpeak leaſing; the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man," Pſalm v. It is a filthineſs that ariſes from the corrupt fountain of the heart. "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this *defileth* a man: for thoſe things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they *defile* the man: for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies: theſe are the things which *defile* a man," Matt. xv.

Mortifying and diſguſting as this truth may appear, it is confirmed from fact by the whole human race, naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam: and there is not a ſaint or chriſtian upon earth who does not acknowlege it with humility and ſelf-abaſement.

ment. It was a view of this, with perſonal application to himſelf, which forced that great prophet of God, Iſaiah, to cry out, "Wo is me, for I am undone, for I a man of *unclean* lips!" Iſa. vi. It was a ſight of this that brought that humiliating ſtrain from one, whom the ſcriptures ſet before us as an example of ſuffering affliction and of patience, "Behold, I am *vile*, I *abhor* myſelf and repent in duſt and aſhes," Job xlii. In ſhort, there is no confeſſion better becomes us all than what is to be found in Iſa. lxiv. 6. "*We* are *all* as an *unclean* thing, and all our righteouſneſſes are as *filthy* rags: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away."

But though this be a confeſſion ſo perfectly adapted to the ſtate of *all* men by nature, to utter it from the ground of the heart is peculiar to the true penitent and real chriſtian alone: becauſe he only is enlightened by the Spirit of God to ſee the *filthineſs* of ſin, and to abhor himſelf as a *filthy creature* upon account of it.

Suffer me then to ſtop here, and before I proceed any farther, to intreat your particular

cular attention to what hath been hitherto offered upon the subject of the christian character, while I inquire whether it belongs to those who are now in the presence of God.

Have you, men and brethren, ever been brought to see and acknowlege that sin is of a defiling nature; that it hath rendered you a filthy, polluted, and abominable creature in the sight of God? so filthy and abominable, as that there is nothing more offensive to you throughout creation, than you most justly are before God, upon account of your moral pollution? O let me beg of you not to hear this as a matter of course. Indeed it is no light thing, it is no trifle: your eternal good is concerned in it. Bear with me then if I repeat and urge the question again and again. Have you ever been made deeply and truly sensible, what a vile, abominable, filthy, and odious creature, sin has rendered you? and have you ever been humbled in the dust of self-abasement and repentance, under an affecting, heart-felt conviction of it? Do not, I beseech you, put off this weighty inquiry. For be

assured of this, the sinner who is not abased before God for his sinfulness now, must rue the consequences of it in hell for ever.

The mark of forgiving grace, sparing mercy, and redeeming love, is only set upon the foreheads of those who sigh and cry for their abominations: and as for those who do not, the eye of an holy God will not spare them, neither will he have pity, but he will recompense their way upon their head. Ezek. ix. The Lord will never hear the prayer and supplication of any but such as feel the *plague* of their own heart; them he will hear in heaven his dwelling-place, and forgive their transgressions, and have compassion upon them. 1 Kings viii. And he hath been pleased to let us know, that though our repentance and self-abasement can never do any thing towards procuring the pardon of our offences, yet, when he graciously forgives them for his own name's sake, and when he saves his people from all their *uncleannesses*; when he sprinkles clean water upon them, and makes them clean from all their *filthiness*, "*then*, says he, shall ye remember your own evil ways, and

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your doings that were not good, and shall *loathe yourselves* in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." Ezek. xxxvi.

So that a man may as well pretend to be an angel incarnate, as to be a real christian, if he be not convinced that sin is of a *defiling* nature, and that it renders him unfit for the presence and enjoyment of God: and if he do not abhor himself for his iniquities, transgressions, and sins. I could not omit this humbling part of christian experience, because it tends to mortify human pride, and to confound the self-perfection, boasted dignity, and fansied righteousness of man. But,

II. Every real christian knows, that the pardon of his sins is and must be the free gift of God, and that it flows to him through the channel of the Redeemer's blood-shedding, sufferings, and death *.

* Ut gratiam impetrat peccator, primò ad Christi sacrificium mentem suam convertat, quo expiata sunt mundi peccata: quia minimè sperandum est ut Deus redeat nobiscum in gratiam, nisi intercedente placationis pretio.

CALVIN. in loc.

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When a ſinner is awakened to a right ſenſe of things, among other things he recollects, that all the thoughts, words, and actions of his life, have been naked and open to the eyes of that God with whom he has to do. Nor does he conſider him as an idle ſpectator, but as a diligent obſerver of the ways of men; ſo as to mark every imagination of their thoughts, every exerciſe of their affections, every motion of their hearts, and every action of their lives †. All theſe are regiſtered as it were, in the records of heaven; how every faculty of their ſoul is engaged, how every moment of their time is employed. And therefore it is ſaid, "God ſhall bring *every work* into judgment, and every *ſecret* thing, whether it be good or bad. He ſhall judge the *ſecrets* of men by Jeſus Chriſt." Nor is there any

† Unnotic'd, notes each moment miſapplied,
In leaves more durable than leaves of braſs;
Writes our whole hiſtory: which Death ſhall read
In every pale delinquent's private ear,
And Judgment publiſh: publiſh to more worlds
Than this; and endleſs age in groans reſound.
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possible method of concealing our sins from his all-seeing eye. No. "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord." "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond; it is engraven upon the top of a rock for ever."

David knew this, and was fully persuaded that it was the grand prerogative of the Most High to discern the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart: and therefore he intreats him to hide his face from his sins, and to blot out all his iniquities; not to look upon his offences, nor to enter into judgment with him for them; not to mark iniquity against him, nor to punish him according to his deservings. And because there was no mercy with God, nor forgiveness for him, but through the blood of his dear Son, he applies to this fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness: he looks to the bleeding Lamb, who was to be offered up in the fulness of time: he fixes his faith upon this great Sacrifice for sin: and he pleads with God for the sprinkling of this

ſpiritual hyſſop upon his ſoul ‡; that the guilt and filth of his ſins might be everlaſtingly done away.

The fooliſh heart of man hath been very inventive in deviſing a variety of methods in order to appeaſe offended Majeſty; to make atonement for ſin, and reconciliation for iniquity. Hence the fond conceit of making amends for paſt offences by future repentance; hence a dangerous preſumption upon the greatneſs of divine mercy; or a fatal reliance upon comparative goodneſs, holy purpoſes, and pious reſolves. Such as theſe are the falſe confidences, and vain hopes, under which the generality ſhelter themſelves, when they are charged with their ſinful and ungodly practices: theſe are the lying refuges to which they promiſe to betake themſelves in the proſpect of death, judgment, and eternity. But alas! all theſe will avail them nothing, when God

‡ Spiritus ſancti officium eſſe ſcimus, intus abluere conſcientias noſtras ſanguine Chriſti; ne ab acceſſu Dei nos prohibeant ſordes noſtræ.

CALVIN in loc.

ſhall lay judgment to the line and righteouſneſs to the plummet. Every ſuch confidence will then prove like the houſe that was built upon the ſand; the ſtorm of divine vengeance will then ſweep away every refuge of lies; and the deluded ſouls who truſted in them will repent of their folly for ever in vain. For the man whoſe eyes are never opened to ſee, that if the pardon of his ſins be not *freely* beſtowed he muſt deſpair of obtaining it, has reaſon to fear that he muſt ſuffer the torment that is due to them throughout eternal ages.

The abſolute neceſſity that forgiveneſs of ſin ſhould be the *free Gift* of God, ariſes from the inability of the creature to do *any thing*, in the *leaſt poſſible degree*, towards procuring it. Can a finite creature make ſatisfaction to God for infinite offences, or for offences which have in them an infinite guilt and demerit? if ſo, the incarnation of the ſecond Perſon in the co-equal Trinity might be judged ſuperfluous. Is not the Law too in its nature and ſpirituality unchangeably the ſame? and if ſo, every creature muſt remain under its curſe, and never

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can free himſelf from it, unleſs he can make himſelf *perfectly holy:* and therefore the Law is called the miniſtration of death, and of condemnation, to ſuch as have no better atonement and righteouſneſs than what they can bring of themſelves, to procure the remiſſion of their ſins and acceptance before God. Beſides, the ſcriptures have aſſured us in ſo many words, that "without ſhedding of blood there is *no Remiſſion* of ſins."

It were natural to ſuppoſe that upon ſuch a declaration as this, every heart would be ready to adopt the language of Balak the king of Moab, and ſay, "Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the moſt high God? ſhall I come before him with burnt-offerings, or with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil?" Mic. vi. What ſaith the apoſtle in the epiſtle to the Hebrews in reply to ſuch an important inquiry? "It is impoſſible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away ſin." Still then the ſame declaration muſt ſtand good, that without ſhedding of blood there is no

remiſſion. And again, "It is blood that maketh an atonement for the ſoul."

What blood then is that through which the forgiveneſs of ſin is obtained? It is that of which we read in the apoſtle's charge to the elders at Epheſus, "Feed the church of *God* which he hath purchaſed with his *own blood*." It is the blood of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt which cleanſeth from all ſin, 1 John i. 7. This is the "blood that purgeth the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God," Heb. ix. 14. which the dear Redeemer of ſouls ſhed upon the accurſed tree, when "he loved the church and gave himſelf for it, that he might ſanctify and *cleanſe* it, and that he might preſent it to himſelf a glorious church, not having ſpot, or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing; but that it ſhould be holy and without blemiſh:" Eph. v. that "he might redeem it from all iniquity, and *purify* to himſelf a peculiar people," Tit. ii.

To this blood as the meritorious cauſe of pardon, and as that which is applied to the ſoul by the power of the Holy Ghoſt to purge it from ſin, the whole ſcriptures di-

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rect us. Whatever is ſpoken in them concerning purifying the unclean, the leprous, and the defiled, is deſigned ultimately to lead our view to this grand reſtorative, the blood of Chriſt; and to ſhew us its *Nature*, *Uſe*, and *Efficacy*. Through this ſuffering and dying Saviour is preached to us the forgiveneſs of ſins. "To him give all the prophets witneſs, that through his name whoſoever believeth in him ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins." "Him hath God ſet forth, as pouring out his ſoul unto death, to be a propitiation for ſin through faith in his blood. Him hath God exalted at his own right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remiſſion of ſins. In whom there is redemption through his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins."

Such a cloud of precious teſtimonies have we from divine truth to confute the Socinian lie and blaſphemy; and to demonſtrate, that the deſign of the ſufferings and death of the bleſſed Jeſus, was to make an atonement for ſin. He died for our ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt. He offered himſelf a ſacrifice for ſin, that he might put away ſin. And

though it be true that in all his moral conduct, holy tempers, and perfectly righteous life, he hath left us an *Example* that we ſhould follow his ſteps; yet the very marrow and glory of the goſpel is, that "Himſelf bare the *Sins* of his people in his own body on the tree:" that "he was wounded for their *Tranſgreſſions*, that he was bruiſed for their *Iniquities*, that the chaſtiſement of their peace was upon him, and that by his *Stripes* they are *healed*."

Take away this delightful truth, and who ſhall wipe the falling tear from the eye of penitential grief? where ſhall the weary and heavy-laden ſoul caſt his burden and find reſt? who or what ſhall give the guilty conſcience peace? who ſhall relieve the troubled mind, or even hope to ſupport the ſinking ſoul, while ſorrow ſwells the breaſt? where ſhall we find a balm to heal the broken heart? or how ſhall we ſay, when the ſtorms of fear and diſtreſs ariſe and threaten deſtruction, peace, be ſtill? alas! let but this ſpring of conſolation be dried up, and anguiſh unutterable, with remedileſs deſpair, muſt immediately ſucceed.

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But bleſſed be God, it is a truth that runs like a golden vein through the goſpel-field, and is a moſt ineſtimable part of the treaſure which there lies hid, that there is forgiveneſs with God through the blood of Chriſt: and this forgiveneſs is to be had *freely*, without money, and without price. And therefore we do not find the penitent pſalmiſt urging any thing before God as a recommendatory plea for the beſtowment of this bleſſing: neither did Iſaiah, Job, David, the Publican, or the Prodigal. And this is the reaſon why we moſt ſeriouſly proteſt againſt that anti-ſcriptural doctrine of the church of Rome, which would perſuade us, that good works, proceeding from grace, are meritorious of ſalvation and pardon: becauſe it ſets at nought the value and efficacy of the blood of Chriſt, and denies that remiſſion of ſin is the *free* gift of God through him. For the ſame reaſon we abjure that erroneous, not to ſay heretical ſentiment of Popery refined, which would perſuade us, that though pardon of ſin is the gift of God through Chriſt, yet our repentance and good works are the procuring

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cauſe of an intereſt in Chriſt. It might as well be ſaid that they are the procuring cauſe of our admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven; for an intereſt in Chriſt, and a title to heaven, are certainly equivalent. And therefore, if our repentance and new obedience can procure the one, they certainly can the other. And for the ſame reaſon we proteſt againſt that abſurd, perplexing, and unſcriptural idea, of a ſecond juſtification by our works, after our firſt juſtification by Chriſt. For juſtification is *one*, and *no more*. It is an act of God, perfect and complete.

The plain and ſimple truth is, we are juſtified, that is, pardoned and accepted before God *meritoriouſly* by Chriſt, *inſtrumentally* by that faith which is of the operation of God, and *declaratively* by thoſe fruits of righteouſneſs which are by Jeſus Chriſt to the praiſe and glory of God.

To aſſert that the pardon of ſin is not the *free Gift* of God in the moſt abſolute ſenſe, irreſpective of any thing the offending, guilty creature can do to procure it, is to render the ſtile of ſcripture in many places

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absurd and unintelligible. For doth not the Lord maintain his own sovereignty in the disposal of his favors to Moses, when he says, "I will have mercy on whom I *will* have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I *will* have compassion?" From whence the apostle makes this natural inference, "therefore it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy:" that is, freely, wholly, sovereignly of God. Doth not the Lord, after he had found a bill of indictment, and lodged his complaint against his professing people of old for the greatest offences by them committed, immediately add, "I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Isa. xliii. 22—25. Do we not see the same conduct repeated in the history of the children of Israel, Ezek. xxxvi. 16?—And do we not find those who were seeking the favor of God, pleading for pardon because of the *freeness* of it; as if they had no hope but what was built upon this consideration? "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for

thine

thine *own sake:* for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee."

But above all, do not the oracles of God abound with numerous declarations of this most valuable truth, that forgiveness of sin is conferred and received as a free gift through the atoning blood of the Lamb? Is it not expressly said, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified *freely* by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. iii. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace?" Eph. i. And surely if salvation itself be the free gift of God, all the spiritual blessings contained in it must be so: and he has read his Bible to very little purpose who does not remember that it tells us, YE ARE SAVED FREELY BY GRACE, Eph. ii.

At the same time that salvation, and all its blessings, flow from the fountain-head of God's free and abounding grace, they are derived to us *through* the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. In him all the fulness and treasures of divine grace are laid up. All

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the mercies which concern juſtification; for "being juſtified by his blood, we are ſaved from wrath through him"—or ſanctification, for it is "the blood of Chriſt which purgeth the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God"—or glorification, for we "have boldneſs to enter into the holieſt by the blood of Jeſus, through that new and living way which he hath conſecrated for us by the ſhedding of his blood." Thus, though the unſearchable riches of grace are beſtowed upon poor ſinners abſolutely and perfectly free, yet they muſt be indebted for them to the ſufferings and obedience unto death of the one Mediator between God and man, Chriſt Jeſus. So that the pleas of ſelf-righteouſneſs are the effects of ſpiritual blindneſs and ignorance: the ſentiments advanced by Socinians reſpecting the perſon and death of Chriſt, are heretical: the church of Rome is proved to be fatally erroneous: and the advocates for Arminianiſm under the moſt dangerous miſtakes: and the man who denies that forgiveneſs of ſins is the free gift of God through the atoning blood of his dear Son, knows as much of

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the true nature of the gospel of Christ, as he does of the language of the new Jerusalem, the city of the living God.

But alas! what will it avail us to be fully acquainted with the method of obtaining the pardon of our sins, if we be not really partakers of it! It can tend no more to our peace, than it can to the happiness of devils to know that there is an heaven, without enjoying it. Permit me, therefore, to make use of this part of our discourse in a way of particular application.

Are you then, my dear hearers, partakers of this invaluable gift? Son, daughter, have you any scriptural reason for believing that God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven your sins? or, have you ever earnestly applied to God for this unspeakable blessing? God, it is true, hath promised to bestow all the blessings of grace and glory upon his people, and in the covenant of grace it is particularly said, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"—but the promise of God to give these blessings, does not supersede the necessity of our asking for them. So far from it, that the promises

miſes of God are the only ground and encouragement of prayer. And when he engages, as the covenant-God of his people, to do ſuch and ſuch things for them, he adds, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the houſe of Iſrael to do it for them," Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27—37.

Hence it is ſaid, "Aſk, and ye ſhall have; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you." And the Lord deſcribes his people by ſuch as ſhall come to him with *weeping* for their ſins, and with *ſupplication* for the pardon of them: every one making particular application to God for a perſonal intereſt in his favor and forgiving love; and with the ſpirit of grace and ſupplication which he hath promiſed to pour upon them, Zech. xii. 10. crying out, "God be merciful to *me* a ſinner—purge *me* with hyſſop, waſh *me* and I ſhall be whiter than ſnow."

Nor will the Lord ſuffer his people to be ſatisfied with aſking, without having the petitions they aſk of him. How many are there who treat the great God, as Pilate did

Jeſus

Jesus Christ, and present their prayers to God, without regarding the answer! But not so the real christian. He will be found waiting upon God for the application of divine mercy and redeeming blood to his soul. He is taught to look upon an unapplied Christ, as no Christ to him. As the leper under the ceremonial dispensation was not cleansed by hearing *about* the blood of the sacrifices, but by having it sprinkled *upon* him; nor the unclean person purified by the waters of expiation till the priest took the bunch of hyssop and sprinkled it *upon* him—so the virtue, benefit, and efficacy of the blood of Christ, consist in the *spiritual application* of it to the conscience.

Hence it is said, "He shall sprinkle many nations." And, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." And the apostle tells the believing people of God, that they were "chosen through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and *sprinkling of the blood of Christ*," 1 Pet. i. 2. And therefore the blessings, which the Redeemer hath purchased by his sufferings and death, are frequently compared to

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things which are of no uſe unleſs *applied*. As for inſtance, they are called "the *Garments* of ſalvation, and the *Robe* of righteouſneſs:" now of what uſe are garments unleſs they are *put on?* Sometimes they are likened to an healing and ſovereign *Balm:* but of what benefit can any remedy be, while *unapplied* to the diſorder which it is calculated to remove? at other times to *Meat* and *Drink*, eſpecially in John vi. but food muſt be *eaten* and *digeſted*, before we can, in the nature of things, receive any nouriſhment from it. So "except ye eat the fleſh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, in the ſpiritual ſenſe of it, ye have no life in you. He that eateth his fleſh and drinketh his blood dwelleth in Chriſt, and Chriſt in him."

Have you now underſtood all theſe things? or, in plainer terms, have you ever felt the burden of your ſins, and fled to Chriſt for relief? have you ever been humbled under the guilt and filth of your ſinful nature, and have you applied to God through Chriſt for pardon and cleanſing? Do you believe what

the ſcriptures ſay concerning the perſon and work of the Lord Jeſus as the only and all-ſufficient Saviour? Are you really willing to truſt in him, and to give yourſelf up to him, for all the purpoſes of preſent ſanctification and eternal ſalvation?—then rejoice and be exceeding glad: be of good cheer, thy ſins are forgiven thee: hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption. For,

III. It is the privilege of the real chriſtian to believe and know, that when God pardons ſin, he pardons all ſin, and *for ever*. "Purge me and I ſhall be *clean*; waſh me and I ſhall be *whiter* than *ſnow*. Hide thy face from my ſins, and blot out *all* mine iniquities." So that ſuch as are waſhed in the fountain of the blood of Chriſt are perfectly cleanſed from all ſin, and are as white and as pure as an angel of light.

This is what David is praying for in the paſſage before us: well knowing that this was the only ſolid ground of comfort for a guilty

guilty conſcience, for a penitent heart. The truth itſelf is the grand peculiarity, and what conſtitutes a great part of the glory of the goſpel of Chriſt. For if this be not true, what peace or hope can there be for a ſinner who believes, that "He who offendeth in *one* point is guilty of all?" James ii. 10. The pſalmiſt, aſſured that God knew every ſin he committed, prays that he would *hide* his face from them: ſenſible that they were marked down in the divine records, beſeeches him to *blot* them out: conſcious that if one remained uncroſſed in the book of his remembrance he muſt be ruined for ever, he begs of God to blot them *all* out.

This petition muſt undoubtedly refer to the work of juſtification, and not to the work of ſanctification; otherwiſe there is no avoiding the doctrine of ſinleſs perfection: which if we admit, the ſcriptures muſt appear ſelf-contradictory; for they tell us, that "if we ſay we have no ſin we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us." The paſſage therefore cannot refer to our ſtate as

we are in ourſelves, but as before God in Chriſt. And that this is the caſe with thoſe who are cleanſed by the Redeemer's blood, is as certain as the truth of God can render it. For, "the blood of Jeſus Chriſt cleanſeth from *all* ſin." And with reſpect to thoſe who are intereſted in it, we may ſay, that all their ſins are forgiven them upon the following authorities: "Though your ſins be as ſcarlet, yet ſhall they be as wool; though they be red like crimſon, yet ſhall they be white as ſnow," Iſa. i. "And Aaron ſhall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confeſs over him *all* the iniquities of the children of Iſrael, and *all* their tranſgreſſions in all their ſins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and the goat ſhall bear upon him *all* their iniquities," Lev. xvi. For the ſpiritual meaning of which, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the ſin of the world;" for the Lord made *all* the iniquities of his people to meet upon him: who himſelf bare their ſins in his own body on the tree.

But

But again, "I will cleanſe them from *all* their iniquity whereby they have ſinned againſt me; and I will pardon *all* their iniquity whereby they have ſinned, and whereby they have tranſgreſſed againſt me," Jer. xxxiii. 8. "He will caſt *all* their ſins behind his back into the depths of the ſea, and when they are ſought for, they ſhall not be found," Jer. l. 20.

As this pardon is free, full, and complete, as to its *Extent*, ſo is it too as to its *Duration*; it is unchangeable and for ever. God will never repeal the acts of oblivion he hath once paſſed. "What God doeth, he doeth for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor taken from it." "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance." "He is of one mind; and with him is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning." The blood of the covenant is of everlaſting value and efficacy; and the righteouſneſs of the Redeemer is an everlaſting righteouſneſs; and the love that God has for a ſinner in Chriſt Jeſus, is an everlaſting love. And therefore his people ſhall *never* come into

condemnation; "for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1.

Herein lies the grand distinction between the new covenant and the old, of grace and works: in the one, all is of God from first to last; in the other, all is of the creature. Hence arises the great superiority of the gospel-dispensation above the legal. For in those sacrifices a remembrance was made of sins *every year*, because they could never make the comers thereunto *perfect*; for if they could, they would have ceased to be offered; because the worshippers *once* purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But the Lord Jesus, by *one* offering of himself *once* offered, hath *for ever perfected* them who are sanctified through the offering of his body once for all. Heb. x. 1, 2, 3—xiv. 10.

Thus
The ransom was paid down; the fund of heaven,
Heav'n's inexhaustible, exhausted fund,
Amazing, and amaz'd, pour'd forth the price
All price beyond: tho' curious to compute,

Arch-

Archangels fail'd to caſt the mighty ſum:
Its value vaſt, ungraſp'd by minds *create*,
For ever hides, and glows in the *Supreme*.

So full, perfect, complete, and everlaſting, is that forgiveneſs which flows into the believing heart through the channel of the Redeemer's ſufferings and death.

And now, what ſhall I ſay to thoſe who profeſs to be partakers of this ineſtimable bleſſing? ſhall I ſuppoſe that there is any heart ſo baſe as to turn the grace of God into licentiouſneſs, and to ſay, "Let us ſin that grace may abound?" what! when ſin is that abominable thing which is above all things hateful to God! what, when it renders his creatures only fit to dwell in hell! what, when it coſt the dear Redeemer ſo much agony, ſorrow, and pain! when it plaited the crown of thorns upon his ſacred head! when it made him ſweat great drops of blood! what, when it pierced his bleeding ſide, and nailed him to the accurſed tree! Is there an heart ſo vile as to hug ſuch an enemy as this in his boſom, while he

profeſſes to have the faith and love of Chriſt there too? Hell itſelf cannot produce ſuch a monſter! God forbid there ſhould be ſuch an one in his preſence at this time! To ſin againſt God, when I believe that he hath given his beloved Son to bleed, to ſuffer, and to die for the ſalvation of my ſoul, is too ſhocking to think of without the utmoſt deteſtation and horror: it is like taking the ſceptre of his grace out of his hand, on purpoſe to ſtrike him with it. And Oh! let "ſhame burn that face to cinder," which dares to harbour ſuch a thought, though but for a moment.

Rather let me hope that an affecting ſenſe of your intereſt in the dear Redeemer's love, makes your hearts glow with unſpeakable affection to him, who loved you and gave himſelf for you. Let me indulge myſelf with the pleaſing idea that the eye of your faith is now fixed upon the exalted Saviour, and that the ſecret language of your ſoul is,

Thou, my *All*!
My theme, my inſpiration, and my crown!
My ſoul's ambition, pleaſure, wealth! my world!

My

My boaſt through time, my bliſs thro' eternity.
Eternity, too ſhort to ſpeak thy praiſe;
Or fathom thy profound of love to man!
How art thou pleas'd by bounty to diſtreſs!
To make us groan beneath our gratitude,
Too big for birth! to favor and confound,
To challenge and to diſtance all return!
Praiſe! flow for ever (if aſtoniſhment
Will give thee leave) my praiſe, for ever flow:
Praiſe ardent, cordial, conſtant, to high heav'n
More fragrant than *Arabia* ſacrific'd,
And all her ſpicy mountains in a flame.

In this delightful frame may every one of us be found through life, repoſe in the arms of death, and ſpend a bleſſed eternity; when we ſhall ſee *him* face to face, "whom having not ſeen we love; and in whom, though now we ſee him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory." Unto whom with the Father, and the eternal Spirit, let the church militant upon earth, and triumphant in heaven, unite in aſcribing ſalvation and honor, love and praiſe, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER.

PRAYER.

"O Lord, the God and Father of our "Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of all "such as seek thy face in him in sincerity "and in truth; of thy mercy and grace we "beseech thee to make us of that blessed "number. Here we are, kneeling before "thee, desirous with unfeigned humility to "confess ourselves by nature lost sinners, "wholly corrupt, and under thy most righ-"teous and eternal curse. We have sinned "in our first father Adam, and have fallen "by our repeated and innumerable trans-"gressions into utter ruin and misery. Un-"able to help ourselves out of this gulph "of sin and misery into which we are "plunged, and knowing that we must in-"evitably perish, if thine almighty power "and infinite love be not extended towards "us—we flee to thee for pardon through "the precious sufferings of thy dear Son; "may we have redemption through his "blood, even the forgiveness of our sins;

"wash

"wash us in that fountain which he hath
"opened for sin and for uncleanness like
"ours, from all the guilt and filth of our
"sins; and for his sake, O Lord, remem-
"ber our iniquities no more against us for
"ever; cast them all behind thy back into
"the depths of the sea, that when they are
"sought for they may not be found.

"And O! for the same thy dear Son's sake,
"do thou receive thy poor returning rebels
"into thy favor and love: put upon them
"the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness,
"clothe them with the garments of his
"precious salvation, that they may be
"comely in his comeliness, and lovely in
"his loveliness: help us to look to Jesus
"with the eye of faith as our Saviour;
"enable us, O God, to stay ourselves upon
"him as our complete deliverer from the
"curse due to our sins, and as having
"brought in an everlasting righteousness
"to intitle us to thy pardoning mercy and
"reconciling love; thy saving grace, and
"everlasting glory—that being justified by
"faith, and saved freely by grace, we may
"have

" have peace with God through Jesus Christ
" our Lord, and rejoice in hope of the glory
" of God.

" And, O Lord, we pray not more for
" an interest in Jesus, than for an union of
" heart to him; that we may become new
" creatures, and be made partakers of a
" divine nature. We know and feel that
" we are not sufficient for these things of
" ourselves; O then, may we experience
" all sufficiency in all things out of the
" fulness of Jesus. In us, that is in our
" flesh, dwelleth no good thing; our hearts
" are prone to evil, and in opposition to all
" that is good; O then do thou supply us
" with grace and strength to help us in every
" time of need, which is every moment.
" Send forth thy blessed Spirit into our
" souls, to instruct, to guide, to sanctify
" and to comfort us—may it work mightily
" and effectually to the subduing our ini-
" quities, to the conquering our corrup-
" tions, to the working in us both to will
" and to do in all things according to thy
" good pleasure. Shed abroad thy love
" upon

" upon our hearts in the richeſt abundance;
" may it be a conſtraining principle in our
" ſouls, ſweetly drawing us away from all
" that is evil, making us ſtudy to pleaſe
" and fear to offend thee; rendering thy
" ſervice a perfect freedom to our ſouls,
" and duty a privilege; and cauſing us to
" take greater delight in thy commandments
" than in all manner of riches. Thus
" may we have fellowſhip with the Father,
" and with Jeſus, through the influence of
" the bleſſed Spirit. May we live to him
" who died for us. May we glorify the
" God of our ſalvation in our ſouls and in
" our bodies. May we experience ſafety
" from all evil, and a cleaving of heart to
" that which is good. May our life be hid
" with Chriſt in God—may it be no longer
" us that live, but Chriſt living within
" us—that whenever Chriſt who has been
" our life ſhall appear, we may alſo appear
" with him, and be glad with exceeding
" joy in eternal glory." Amen.

END OF VOL. I.